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Boner's Lyrics

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High Sch. and Univ. of
1889; m. Graham, N. C., Jan.
ret Lula Tate. Taught in
1884-90; instr. and later prin.
Sch., 1884-90, and part of
apt. schs.; asso. in English,
1890-6; prof. English and

Fredericksburg Coll., 1896-
1900; prof. Latin, Peace Inst., Raleigh, N.
C., since 1900. Presby'n. Democrat. *Author:*
Fugitive Lines (poems), 1897 P2. Contb'r
verses to Harper's Mag., The Century, etc.
Address: Raleigh, N. C.

STOCKARD, H. J. (of N. C.).
A Study in Southern Poetry. (With se-
lections from North Carolina poets). N.
Y., 1911. \$5.00

STOCKARD, S. W., History of
Guilford County, N. C. Plates. Knox-
ville, 1902. \$4.50

— History of Alamance, N.
C. Plates. Raleigh, 1900. \$5.00

BONER, John H. (of Salem, N. C.), Poems by. 1st edition. Portrait. N. Y., 1903. \$5.00
With sketch of the Life of the author by H. J. Stockard.



John H. Boner.

POEMS

BY

JOHN HENRY BONER

Illustrated by

A. G. HEATON

NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
MCMIII

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By **LOTTIE A. BONER**

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DEDICATED
to the memory of
THEOPHILUS HUNTER HILL

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Introduction

The author of these lyrics, John Henry Boner, is a North Carolinian, born in Salem, in 1845. He edited papers there and in Asheville, North Carolina, for some time; and, in 1869-70, was chief clerk of the North Carolina House of Representatives. In 1871, he entered the civil service in Washington, where he remained for fifteen or sixteen years. Thence he went to New York City and engaged in journalism. He served as literary editor of the *New York World*, was on the staff of "The Century Dictionary," and became editor of *The Literary Digest*. Impaired health compelled him to give up his arduous duties and to seek restoration among his friends in his native State.

His first and only volume of poetry, "Whispering Pines," was published in 1883. A pamphlet containing a dozen or so of his later poems appeared a year or two ago. He has not been silent during this interval, however: from time to time his lines have found setting in our best magazines, notably in the *Century*.

It is fortunate that the author, in the maturity of his life, has brought together into this volume, under his final touch, what his sound critical judgment approves. The result is a permanent addition to poetry. Here are things that will live. For one to be convinced of this one has but to take up the volume sympathet-

ically, turn to any page in it, and read. Some of the pieces have already taken their places in our best anthologies, and, more significant than this, in the hearts of the people.

The collection is properly named: lyrics they are throughout. The singing tone is distinct from the matchless stanzas, "Poe's Cottage at Fordham" to the rollicking lines, "Crismus Times is Come." The one, from his later work, in its haunting music, is worthy the great spirit it commemorates; the other, from his "Whispering Pines," in its impulsive sweep and intimate association of the earthly and the spiritual, is the whole negro race at a touch.

Between these two poems, each well nigh flawless, there is a wide range. Here are such stirring ballads as "The Light'ood Fire" and "On an Old Pine," such tender melodies as "Song of the Old Mill Wheel" and "Where are the Places That We See in Dreams;" such vivid etchings as "Sparrows in the Snow" and "Midsummer Noon;" and such grave sonnets as "Time Brings Roses" and "Remembrance."

The author's art has been a growth. Comparing his later work with his earlier, one is impressed with his greater power and larger vision. Some of his more recent poems are of a rare and delicate quality, and are instinct with human interest. He has used the sonnet more freely for the expression of his deeper thought, and he has handled it with no ordinary skill. The two mentioned above, together with "Lodge or Mansion," "Our American God, Hustle," "Easter Advent," and

"If I Could but Escape Life's Fretting Ills" are convincing examples.

There is a hopeful reverence, reached through calm reflection, pervading his work. While toward the morning he surveys, from the mountain-tops of his life, pleasing prospects and desert wastes; and while toward the evening the shadows lower upon his path, he can say:

"But shadows are not always what they seem—
God's love sometimes appears to be his wrath,
And his best gift is the white rose of death."

These serious poems, in the writer's opinion, represent the work at its highest excellence; but "The Christmas Toast" to Dan Chaucer and "A Boy in the Piney Woods" are equally—nay, preëminently—true of the poet; for there is a wave of good cheer in his heart. Scarcely did he ever strike a chord that jars with the optimism ringing in his lines. He has delivered well a powerful message to mankind.

HENRY JEROME STOCKARD.

Raleigh, N. C.

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BONER'S LYRICS

Poe's Cottage at Fordham

Here lived the soul enchanted
By melody of song;
Here dwelt the spirit haunted
By a demoniac throng;
Here sang the lips elated;
Here grief and death were sated;
Here loved and here unmated
Was he, so frail, so strong.

Here wintry winds and cheerless
The dying firelight blew
While he whose song was peerless
Dreamed the drear midnight through,
And from dull embers chilling
Crept shadows darkly filling
The silent place, and thrilling
His fancy as they grew.

Here, with brow bared to heaven,
In starry night he stood,
With the lost star of seven
Feeling sad brotherhood.
Here in the sobbing showers
Of dark autumnal hours
He heard suspected powers
Shriek through the stormy wood.

From visions of Apollo
And of Astarte's bliss,
He gazed into the hollow
And hopeless vale of Dis;
And though earth were surrounded
By heaven, it still was mounded
With graves. His soul had sounded
The dolorous abyss.

Proud, mad, but not defiant,
He touched at heaven and hell.
Fate found a rare soul pliant
And rung her changes well.
Alternately his lyre,
Stranded with strings of fire,
Led earth's most happy choir
Or flashed with Israfil.

No singer of old story
Luting accustomed lays,
No harper for new glory,
No mendicant for praise,
He struck high chords and splendid,
Wherein were fiercely blended
Tones that unfinished ended
With his unfinished days.

Here through this lowly portal,
Made sacred by his name,
Unheralded immortal
The mortal went and came.
And fate that then denied him,
And envy that decried him,
And malice that belied him,
Have cenotaphed his fame.

On a Portrait of Poe

I.

He was by vicious curs bayed and beset
When he passed by the gateway of this world
On his immortal quest. He stopped and hurled
Some gems that crippled half the pack, and yet
A few went hounding him until he met
The Angel in whose dark plumes he was furled.
Unutterable scorn that proud lip curled,
Unlanguaged grief those eyes of sorrow wet.
But infamy held off until he lay
Dead in his grave and shorn of all his might,
Then fiercely struck—not boldly! Even to-day
The hand that drives its little lance of spite
At that brow chapleted with fadeless bay
Belies its aim and trembles with affright.

II.

Thou gentleman, whose blue veins purely ran
Ancestral chastity and noble pride,
Thy fate was and is hard—to be belied
By lepers of an ignominious clan.
It matters not that thou didst lay the plan
Of a new era reaching far and wide
And builded for us on time's golden tide
More than the pleasure-domes of Kubla Khan—
It matters not that advocates for thee,
And worthy of thee, thy true greatness tell—
Thou art an outlaw, and Persephone,
When she beheld thy shade august and fell,
Shrank with her pallid court and frantically
Slammed, locked, and bolted every door of hell.

City Sonnets

BROADWAY AT NOON.

Niagara of streets! See this and know,
The secret of New York—the spell that never
Can be resisted or forgot, the flow
Of torrented humanity, that ever
Is counter-currented, yet seems to sweep
Toward you, passes, plunges, and is lost
Abysmally, still followed by the deep
And surging stream, whereon are swiftly tost
The faces, faces, faces! Not the roar
Of ocean on her wildest crags could drown
The tumult of this torrent; and the prey
Of tempests, were they cast upon the shore
From places where the wild waves drew them
down,
Could show no stranger wrecks than this Broad-
way.

Solitude

Do you seek solitude? Go not to fields
Or pathless woods, or to the lonely shore,
Nor court the privacy seclusion yields
In some old house whose very ancient door
Proclaims the absence of intrusive guests.
Think not of desert waste, nor mountain height,
Nor tropic isle, nor where the eider nests
In arctic silence, nor the sea-gull's flight
In voiceless azure. But for solitude
Perfect, unparalleled, abiding, deep,
When next you feel the solitary mood
Insistent, trust not even dreamless sleep—
When for true loneliness your soul entreats,
Come to New York, and walk these crowded
streets.

Manhattan

"Wonderful!" This ejaculation comes
Not from a stranger, but from one whose nurse
Led him in fields where now the city hums—
The capital city of the universe.
For strangers are New Yorkers in three days,
But the New Yorker is an alien still
At fourscore years and ten among the ways
Familiar to his sight—his own door-sill
Marked by the eye of commerce, whose swift gnomes
Already fashion a fantastic change.
Oh, homeless city of most sumptuous homes!—
If the old Knickerbockers' spirits range
Manhattan, they have viewed queer things I ween
Since their tiled gables circled Bowling Green.

Houses in an Old Street

How eloquent are these of time long past!—
An architectural text still plain to read,
Though sadly ravaged and decaying fast,
Of a great epic—these the epicede
Of their departed era. Note the walls,
The steps, the windows, and the carven doors.
Degenerate now are those once stately halls,
With alien footsteps on their pillaged floors.
Forlorn, forlorn! There is no sadder thing
In all the world than a forsaken home
About which vestiges of grandeur cling.
But so it is, and even noble Rome
Is Rome no more; her meager remnant totters—
Cast-iron, paint, asphaltum, and globe-trotters.

A Phantom

A gloomy day in late September dies
Away in storm; the midnight hour is cold;
Mildew is in the air—a vaulty mould.
One car up silent Broadway swiftly flies.
On Reade street a night-watchman stoutly tries
The doors of commerce, and before an old
Lone dwelling-house, whose age may not be told,
He stops transfixed, with startled, staring eyes;
For there, as if embodied from the gust
That sweeps the rain down with malignant might,
Something that is not human seems to stir—
A cloaked and weazen shape, with key of rust
Fumbling the lock. "What do you here to-night?"
I lived here once. "Who are you?" *Aaron Burr.*

Hatteras

A sulphurous sunset illumines the waters commotion
Where never a wave has outrun the tempestuous
doom
Of the turbulent flood of the lair of the storms of the
ocean,
And crest answers crest with a signal of mutinous
spume—
A sunset of sulphurous hue on the waters abhorrent
That plunge to the north and the south and the east
and the west,
And leap to the sinister light from the furious torrent
As if they would fain break the spell of their tor-
ment and rest.
In the vitreous gleam of the sky with the darkness
impending
The billows that bowl to the lash of the wind and
the tide
Break up with intolerant force and infuriate rending
Of limits rebound and rebound by the spirit defied.
For the waves they are weary of sinking and rising and
flying,
And weary of wind and the rage of the stream of the
deep;

They are weary of cries of despair and the moans of the
dying,
And they long for the peace of a tranquil and passionless sleep;
They are weary of dragging the foam-chains in treacherous places,
Of surge and of swirl and of reflux sweep to the shoals,
And weary of washing the ghastly and drowning white faces
That float and cry out to the parting and terrified souls.
But the demon of wreck is their monstrous and merciless master,
And he comes even now from the hot Caribbean afar,
Where the torrid sun breeds to his spirit a host for disaster
That lurks for the fall of a night with no moon and no star.
He has gathered the winds of the tropic and direful tornadoes
That spread devastation by day and destruction by night;
He has sent for his herald the lightning that girts the Barbadoes,
And his mantle is thunder and whirlwind the track of his flight.
He tramples the bays and the straits with disdain and with frantic
Delight smites the waters that crouch in his pitiless way
As he sweeps from the Mexican Gulf to the roaring Atlantic,
Foresignaling storm to the night and the place of his prey.

From the rack of the sky of the twilight a lessening
crescent

Sinks into the gathering gloom of the blackness of
night,

And the wandering breakers are lit with a gleam
phosphorescent

As landward they grieve in the glimmer of Hat-
teras light—

A glimmer that tracks a lone ship which is toiling and
beating

Away from the tempest impending but hopeless to
flee—

From the demon that comes with a luminous flame for
a greeting

And wings that uncover the maw of the ravenous
sea.

And the waves that are weary of wreck and destruction
are maddened.

They rise to the call of the trumpeting hurricane
king;

They race to salute him in frenzy as if they were glad-
dened

At sound of his voice and the swoop of his slumber-
less wing.

In the vortex of tempest the tragedy wild is completed.

At midnight the sky is unclouded and brilliant with
stars;

To the fathomless thousands a hundred more dead sink
unsheeted,

And the ship rent and mastless is crashing on Hat-
teras bars.

Ballad of an Old Pine

Oh for the old days, when along
My boughs a lively color sped,
While spring-time birds returned with song—
Blue birds and red.

Bright are the blossom-tinted hills
In violet and cerulean lights;
Into the vale a luster spills
From fervent heights.

Marvels of crystal from the sky
Have plashed on greenening fields and broke
To daisies, and from out them fly
A fairy folk—

Pale butterflies of gold that seem
At revel on the lilting wing
To music fancied in the dream
Of waking spring.

Ho, stripling, tasseled out in green
And bending in your gallant pride
To budding beauties all in sheen
On yonder side,

You yet shall stand gray and alone,
Hushed all your rapturous vernal lays.
O nature, nature, heart of stone,
Give back my days—

Give back my glory and life's charms;
Give back the majesty of form;
Give back the strength of lusty arms
To play with storm.

Vain, vain my cry. Then be it so.
I yield—(but oh, the sweet spring's breath!)
Come quickly—strike and lay me low,
Triumphant Death.

Midsommer Noon

The city is all blinding glare
Insufferable, and fiery air
 Quivers from roof and street.
The dusty trees are crimped and dry.
Under her window, passing by,
 Camille hears weary feet.

So hot the hour that one might swoon,
Tho hidden from the glaring noon
 And latticed from the light.
Through the green jalousies there plays
A twilight from the outer blaze.
 Camille is clad in white.

Her silken chamber, garnet-hued
And dim, is one for lassitude,
 Where harsh sound cannot reach.
There floats about the dusky room,
From silvern wicker, the perfume
 Of muscatel and peach.

From scarlet-crowned geranium beds
On a bright lawn, warm odor sheds
 That steals to her repose,
Weighting the weary sense of heat,
Where, massed about a window-seat,
 Are heliotrope and rose.

The figures outside passing throw
Shadows that on the ceiling flow
Like ripples on a stream.
One fly swims in the stagnant air.
Camille has loosed her sheaf of hair—
She moves as in a dream.

Her affluent hair is blond as wheat
June-sunned to harvest, warmly sweet,
And heavy as spun gold.
Such hair has Ceres going through
The corn leaves ere the evening dew
Upon the grass is cold.

A jeweled clock has softly stirred
The silence like a dreaming bird
And gone to sleep again.
Camille lies on her dainty bed
With one arm circled overhead,
The other lengthwise lain.

Still flows the ripples on the wall.
Lightly a wilted rose lets fall
Its leaves, as if a hand
Had touched it. Silence is intense,
For opiate perfume's opulence
Has drowsed the blue-skied land.

She slumbers now, with breaths as light
As zephyrs in a starry night
That faintly fall and rise.
She sleeps; her moist lips bud and part—
A cactus blossom, at whose heart
A globe of honey lies.

A Song at Evening

Years have passed since I knew thee and proved thee,
O Solitude, wisest and best—
Since the tears of my first passion moved thee
To sing to my spirit of rest.
Years have passed; I have wandered, forsaking
Thy temple and teachings, and taking
No thought of thee. Thou hast been making
For me loving quest.

I return to thee now. I am weary.
The throng will not miss me, nor I
Find thine innermost dim court a dreary
Retreat; let the pageant pass by.
And slowly he comes that went springing,
And dolefully he that went singing,
No laurel leaf holding, and bringing
No hope but to die.

Oh, tenderly draw me and fold me
In raiment of thine pure and sweet.
Let thine arms as in other days hold me
In peacefulest dreams at thy feet.
Let there be no more bitter heart-ailing;
Let me sleep and forget unavailing
Desire and the hope ever failing—
The draught incomplete.
NEW YORK CITY.

A Dead Poet

From midnight until dawn I watched the dead,
Musing the mysteries of Life and Death;
Then, in the wan light of that silent hour,
Blew out the flickering taper, which left trail
Toward the morning star a thread of cloud,
And folding back the drapery from his face—
The drapery that all night had languidly
Moved with the languid current of the wind—
I gazed upon the eyes that never more
Could look on earth. A cool, ethereal breeze
Swept through the chamber, and when it had passed
It seemed that he had sighed—not wearily,
But like one that has spent a weary night
And feels the blissfulness of rest at last.
His fond wish had been granted. He had died
Away from the tumultuous city wheels,
Had seen great sunsets closing azure days
And quiet moonlight silvering ancient trees,
Had heard the morning music of the birds,
Had smelt sweet grasses in the heat of noon,
Breathed the aroma of the evening shower,
And from his open window watched the stars
Glide into night's divine processional.
His was the saddest fate—to love and lose;
And then, most pitiful, to strive for fame
And die with finger-tips against the wreath.

Cricket Lodge

[On lighting my first fire in Cricket Lodge, Staten Island, N. Y., October 15, 1893.]

[DEDICATED TO M. B.]

On a green and breezy hill
Overlooking Arthur Kill
And the Orange Mountains blue
In their everchanging hue—
Here not far from where the gull
Skims along the Kill von Kull,
Winging to the Upper Bay
Thence the ocean vast to roam,
Here for life's remaining day
I have builded me a home.

Rather had I hewn my beam
By old Yaddin's gentle stream—
Rather there on wintry days
Felt the cheery lightwood's blaze,
Heard the cawing of the crow
And the wild geese honking go—
Rather there the summer long
Melon, fig, and scuppernong
Seen and tasted—rather there
Felt the ever balmy air;
But not thus the stern fates would.
Be it so—and God is good.

Cricket Lodge I named my home,
For at evening when I come
From the city's noisy throng,
 Weary, weary, limb and brain,
From the grass the cricket's song
 (Musical and quaint refrain)
Welcomes me; and I have heard
Many a night the mocking-bird
Singing to a heavenly moon;
But the crickets' changeless tune,
Modest, plaintive, gives to me
Wonderful tranquility.
Some I know the frost will dodge,
Winter with me in my lodge.
And on many a midnight drear
Chirrup to my drowsy ear.
If but one survive the chill
He shall be my comrade still,
And his song shall give me cheer
Till the bud of a new year,
When the grass again shall green
And his choir in full be seen.

Innovation has full sway,
Ornate gracelessness full play—
Romanesque, Byzantine, Greek,
Persian, Chinese, English freak,
Pointed, rounded, every style
Jumbled in one gimcrack pile,
Form and beauty set at naught—
Such are built, such houses bought;
But there's none of such hodge-podge
In the make of Cricket Lodge.

It is but a lodge indeed—
Two end-gables, one end freed

From rigidity by sweep
Of a dormer-windowed deep
Rooftree—such where pigeons preen—
And the shingles stained moss-green.
Slate-gray colored is the house
(Just the shading of a mouse),
With a middle belt of red
(Like leaves where Cock Robin bled);
Red the Chimney, looking far
Seaward when the morning star
Hangs above the gleaming sea;
Westward when the splendid sun,
Glorifying sward and tree,
Fades away and day is done.

Inside no white wall offends.
Restful terra-cotta blends
With hues negative, and books
Lounge at ease in curtained nooks.
Who would not forego the gas
Of the city here to pass
Evening hours with the lamplight shed
Softly on the book you handle,
And when drowsy mount to bed
With a fragrant waxen candle?
How that brings back nights of old,
When, the last ghost-story told,
You went whistling to your room
Through the chill and silent gloom,
Swift to bed, and in the dark
Watched the last expiring spark,
And, ere yet you fell to sleep,
Saw a silvern moonbeam creep
Slanting across the floor—
Cuddled up and knew no more.

Here shall I enjoy again
Winter froze and sleety rain.
Let the winds blow shrill and cold,
Let the snows my lodge enfold;
By my ruddy fire I'll muse,
Or some favorite volume choose,
Snuggled like a nested hare
In my sleepy-hollow chair.
I have even set apart
Certain treasures of my heart
For re-feasting—Laurence Sterne's
"Journey," "Don Quixote," Burns,
Cowper's "Task," George Herbert, Poe,
William Blake, Balzac, DeFoe,
Thackeray (sublimated fun!),
Noble, knightly Tennyson,
Wordsworth (even to "Peter Bell"),
Scott, "The Blessed Damozel,"
Shakespeare often, and a score
Of our own—but names no more.
One among the poems here,
Held than anything more dear,
For some Christmas night I'll leave—
Keat's loved "Saint Agnes Eve."
Oh immortals, ye who dwell
In the meads of Asphodel,
May that fair youth be endued
With most sweet beatitude.

This, let come whatever may,
Shall be a memorial day.
Here's my fireplace, flanked by thick
Pilasters of honest brick
(So used by old-timey folk),
With a mantel top of oak,
And betwixt the columned piles
A tympanum of blue tiles,

With a center-piece where follows
Breaking clouds a flight of swallows.
That's my dream-piece—wing-and-wing
Swallows heralding the spring—
After winter's cold subjection
Life resurgent!—resurrection!

Ready now the grate is made;
Paper, wood, and coal are laid.
Scratch!—the phosphor is ignited.
Whirr!—and my first fire is lighted.
What shall be the incantation?—
Hear, kind heaven, my conjuration:

May she unto whom I cleave
Loyally and do believe
Noblest type of womanhood—
She who faithfully has stood
By my side and shared with me
For a score of years and three
Joy and sorrow, mirth and tears,
Here find life's declining years
Happier than the past has been.
On earth peace, good will toward men.

A Stained-Glass Window

A stained-glass window overhangs my stairs
At the first landing—miniature and plain—
The glass of sea-green, blue, and orange stain.
(Your builder ventures as no artist dares!)

But that small window takes me unawares
With fine effects of light time and again.
Sometimes it brings back some sweet organ-strain;
Sometimes the mingled color quite ensnares
Imagination. Late last night I stood
In the enchantment of its moonlit glow.
A casement high and triple arched I could
Discern and hear a yearning clarion blow,
And Madeline in visioned saintlihood
Awoke from balmy sleep to Porphyro.

Winter Breakfast by Candle-Light

All night the storm raged, and the snow lies deep;
The wind roared on my rooftree like the sound
Of ocean when great breakers landward pound;
I heard the strong gusts by my window sweep,
And for delight of listening could not sleep.
The park is billowed with mound after mound;
Hardly may one familiar scene be found,
And still the wind and snow their fury keep.
I need no condolence for early rising.
I reach the city happier for the sight
Of these great mysteries—these dawns surprising—
The sky sometimes a miracle of light—
And who would find his Java appetizing,
Let him the aroma get by candle-light.

Lamps and Candles

I have no fondness for the electric blaze
In Cricket Lodge. Though arcs hang globed for
light,

I still say, no, not this, some other night—
Give me again my lamps and candle-trays.

There's nothing restful in the flash that plays

From the fierce carbon; it is all too bright,

And at its glare shy fancy takes her flight.

Candles and lamps, the lights of ancient days,

When demigods trod earth and art was born,

Retain some element of fire divine;

The lamp has not by craft been wholly shorn

Of beauty, and the candle now so fine

Yet represents the torch with which forlorn

Ceres went searching for lost Proserpine.

A Midsummer Reflection

My soul is vexed, to think how many years

I lived away from nature, seeing not

Sunset or moonrise—how I quite forgot

The beauty that in changing clouds appears

And the procession of the gleaming spheres—

How I endured the bedlamism, the hot

And pestilential city, with no spot

For cool and sweet repose—with weary ears

Turned on my pillow, well-nigh mad for sleep,

And woke to see dawn fuming as from hell.

What elevating vigils now I keep!

Hesper at eve, Phosphor at morn I tell

My orisons unto, and hear the deep

Sweet tones of many a distant evening bell.

Jack

There's more than instinct in the jocund play
Of "Jack," the little Scot, dear as a child.
Alas! that arrogance has so misstiled
The intelligence of brutes, and said them nay
At this life's close. Denying them, there may
Be no Supreme law such as man has filed
Against them. I could well be reconciled
To share with all of them a judgment-day
And life eternal. Not a blasphemous thought
(Witness, O Thou who knowest me) is mine:
But this dog's life, so innocent, is fraught
With intimations of such high design
That I could wish we never had been taught
To think man only holds the spark divine.

Tony

How often have I wished that he could speak—
That jet-black mute with chrysoberyl eyes
Who on my hearth-rug indolently lies
A-blink with solid comfort, while the bleak
Wind of the night makes the cold shutters creak.
I have been told that cats are wondrous wise,
Yet I have seen fools with that same deep guise,
That owlsh eye. Let but a trapped mouse squeak!
Then would his glare of wisdom be applied!
Then would the mystic his true nature show!
His ancestors in Egypt mummified
For Isis many centuries ago
Could doubtless puzzling oracles decide.
I quite distrust that Tony could do so.

The Return of the Crickets

God bless the little fellows—here again!
Wee minnesingers, tuning one by one
For the full concert soon to be begun.
I hear it—hear it!—’tis the selfsame strain,
The old familiar serenade! Let wane
The sun now when some ardent day is done,
And through the grass the opening notes will run.
Dear little fellow-minstrels, I would fain
Go troubadouring with you through the meads,
Sing to the moon poised in night’s starry middle,
Follow wherever vagrant fancy leads,
And think no more of life’s confusing riddle,
Content to die at last with autumn weeds;
But pshaw! I’d never learn to play your fiddle.

Fog

I saw my lodge whelmed in a sea of cloud
When I looked back at it. Across the Bay
The boat starts cautiously this dismal day,
Answering hoarse signals with blast sharp and loud.
Now on by Robbins Reef bell she has plowed
Into a more impenetrable gray,
Out of which looms and glooms and fades away
An ocean liner dark and stately prowed.
By shadowy masts of ghostly craft we glide,
Sounding reply to warnings near and far;
By Castle Williams, grim and cavern-eyed,
Asleep and dreaming of a mighty war;
Then the murk landing. In the eventide
My home-light glows a mellow opal star.

Planting Crocus Bulbs

It is a late and chill October day.

A violet mist veils the far Jersey hills,
But richest color the near landscape fills,
And the green turf is greener than in May.
Gone are the birds and crickets. Well-a-day,
They will come back some time, when springtime
spills

New blossoms where the frosty dew now kills.
We dig the cool earth, and therein we lay
Bulbs of the crocus to await that time,
Confident that through all the winter drear
They will lie dreaming of that glorious hour
And shall awake in beauty! Oh, sublime,
In such small miracles, the hope to cheer
The soul that trusts God's wisdom, love, and power.

Robin-Snow

Bird-songs and snow-flakes!—There is something jolly
In Nature's mood to-day, and lightly she
Is jesting with the Earth, whom she set free
But lately from a wintry melancholy,
In which for her dear sake he wore the holly.
Flying to meet her on the hilltops, he—
Expecting blossoms her fair gift to be—
Is pelted with a snow-storm, and the folly
Of his desire is twitted from afar.
But he is not a faint-heart lover,—no—
He knows she yet will give the Morning Star
To him for pleasure, and with him will go
Sunward through space where zones of beauty are;
So patiently he takes her gift of snow.

Presto

In three days came the glorious transformation,
And clouds of blossoms gathered in the air
About the trees of cherry, peach, and pear,
And the broad apple had rich coronation.
Like a magic came a luminous creation
Of beauty down heaven's blue and opal stair,
Sprinkling upon the green grass everywhere
Gold brighter than earth's finest transmutation.
Birds warbled for the very sake of song,
Changing from tree to tree on quivering wing;
And one pale hand that all the winter long
Had shrunk from death's—a frail and piteous
thing—
Feeling a friendlier touch, grew gently strong,
Reached out, and dallied with the hair of Spring.

An Evening in Early Spring

A settled rain is making in from sea;
A slate-blue drifting mist has blurred the white
Of apple blossoms and the dogwood's light,
And mezzotinted every greening tree.
A cold wind draws from out the east. One bee
That to the rank-sweet hyacinths came pight
Touched at them all and took momentous flight.
Later a butterfly raced in, and he
Paused but a wingfold and went glimmering on.
Now twilight steals along the old stone wall
Across the highway; day is almost gone.
It is too chill even for the frogs to call.
I draw my curtains on the darkening lawn,
And the long night rain has begun to fall.

Lodge or Mansion

How shall I for a livelihood provide
Another year, that I may lock my door
Each night upon a small but certain store,
And safely in my little lodge abide?
Surely I have no heaven-offending pride;
I earn my bread, nor feel the labor sore;
Have little, but no spite for who has more;
Yet I do always fear the reckless stride
Of some rude fate toward my cherished all.
Shame on such fears. Down, down beside thy bed
This night, remembering that the sparrow's fall
Is noted, and the cricket wisely fed.
Not for thy lodge, but for a mansion call,
To Him who had not where to lay his head.

If I Could but Escape Life's Fretting Ills

If I could but escape life's fretting ill,
Such as attend the daily earn of bread,
And such as summon anxious looks ahead,
And such when one with indignation fills—
If I could but shut out the care that kills
My little leisure, and with stealthy tread
Comes in the night and sits beside my bed—
Well—then—what then? Would sunset on the hills
Administer a more divine repose
Or dawn distil elixir for my veins?
There is no answer, for no being knows
What life would be without consuming pains.
But He who shapes the beauty of the rose,
And sheds its leaves, is Wisdom—and He reigns.

TO A. G. H.

Sitting alone beside my hearth to-night
I conjure up that cold midwinter time
When we sat here together till the chime
Of morning hours began, and then were quite
Loth to quit converse and the warm firelight.
There hangs your art-gift. It were almost crime
To wish the Moslems back in their proud prime
At the Alhambra, but their dolorous flight
Is one of history's mournful tales to me.
The Moorish girls within that mosque-door still
Grieve for those exiles nevermore to be
Aught but romantic phantoms, and I see
In fancy on yon blue and distant hill
The last sad pageantry of Boabdil.

The Wolf

The wolf came sniffing at my door,
But the wolf had prowled on my track before,
And his sniff, sniff, sniff at my lodge door-sill
Only made me laugh at his devilish will.

I stirred my fire and read my book,
And joyed my soul at my ingle-nook.
His sniff and his snarl were always there,
But my heart was not the heart of a hare.

I cursed the beast and drove him away,
But he came with the fall of night each day,
And his sniff, sniff, sniff the whole night through
I could hear between the winds that blew.

And the time came when I laughed no more,
But glanced with fear at my frail lodge door,
For now I knew that the wolf at bay
Sooner or later would have his way.

The Fates were three, and I was one.
About my life a net was spun;
My soul grew faint in the deadly snare,
And the shrewd wolf knew my heart's despair.

A crash, and my door flew open wide.
My strength was not as the beast's at my side.
That night on my hearthstone cold and bare
He licked his paw and made his lair.

Immortality

There is a hope of heaven in every human breast—
A hope of life supernal in some far region blest,—
Of an immortal vesture, of an eternal rest.

There is a hope undying that life's inglorious span
The travail strange and painful, and death's un pitying
 ban,
May not complete the miracle, may not be all of man.

There is a hope unfounded in myth or creed or lore
That recompense for mortals awaits them at the door
Where they lay down their burdens and pass and are
 no more.

There is a hope inspiring the spirits of the brave
Who conquer legions of evils and death's lethean wave
With fortitude undaunted by darkness of the grave.

There is a hope whose radiance unto the weak appears
A light upon their pathway throughout the dolorous
 years,
And promises deliverance beyond their vale of tears.

There is a hope uplifting the weary head of pain
Which, crowned with thorns and bruises, in agony has
 lain,—
That though man die and vanish, yet shall he live
 again.

This hope imperishable, coeval with the race,
Makes epochal existence in this abiding-place—
A date of incarnation in spiritual space.

No psychic evolution contributed this trust
In conscious resurrection to him whose body must
As ashes go to ashes, as dust return to dust.

He who first saw the myriad of stars in order roll,
Or marked the tide of ocean, or the divine control
Of universal beauty, proclaimed himself a soul.

On what primordial mountain he hailed a rising sun,
Or in what vale ambrosial walked when the day was
done,
Or what his certain feature, or what his course to run—

He who first sang in gladness of spirit to the sky,
Or who with lamentation first closed a tearful eye,
Conceived the faith which teaches that man shall never
die.

No fabulist had painted the vision of a dream
Prefiguring existence beyond the mystic stream
Whose melancholy darkness became a happy theme.

No oracle had given to man a secret deep,—
No gracious mediator had promised those who weep
A jubilant revival after the dreaded sleep.

No altar had been builded, no sacrifice been laid,
No homage had been offered, no adoration paid,
No prayer and no thanksgiving to Deity been made.

And yet man felt assurance of supramortal bliss;
Faith symbolized survival beyond his grave's abyss,
And for his holy spirit an apotheosis—

That noble faith, that credence which gives existence
worth

And, with a sense exultant of a celestial birth,
Entablatures with triumph the sepulchers of earth.

Through cycles cataclysmic the changing world has
sped;

Through cosmical translation its beauty has been shed;
Through marvelous transition man's destiny has led.

From rites and mounds barbaric the primal altar came,
Whose garlanded inscription declared a higher name
To devotees whose incense hallowed a finer flame.

The colonnaded temple in vales Arcadian rose,
And Pagan art, for emblems of a divine repose,
Types of majestic beauty interpreted and chose.

The simply tuneful timbre of sylvan oat and lyre—
Sweet solace of the prophet whose lips were touched
with fire—

Preluded the rich organ and the symphonic choir.

The poesy that numbered a madrigal refrain
For nomad of the desert or shepherd of the plain
Molded a lovelier language, inspired a loftier strain.

So quickened the florescence of manhood, and man
stood

An archetype of glory and herald of the good
Predestined to develop the human saintlihood.

From boreal aurora to Southern Cross a chime
Of ringing bells pealed skyward a harmony sublime—
A musical concordance significant in time.

These bells attune the ages, and art's divining rod
Reveals a heavenly vista, and science, lightning-shod,
Blazons upon the future, man's destiny is God.

The Way of Blessedness

True piety's the Way of Blessedness—

Search as we may, this truth remains the same.

I am not fit to speak His holy name,

Yet even I can tell how He will bless

One who contritely shall His name confess.

How often have I felt sin's hateful shame

Envelop me as a consuming flame

And torture me with merciless distress!

Where could I flee then but to Him the Pure

Who healed the leper, gave the blind his sight?

Earth's best and wisest have found Him a sure

And safe retreat; then so a witling might.

His friendly words of grace and peace endure:

My yoke is easy, and my burden light.

Would I could speak as with lips touched by fire—

Would I could tell of blessedness complete,

Of saintship, of communion long and sweet

With Him who is the purest hearts' desire.

But I can not; I only know that higher

And nobler life unveils to one whose feet

Attend the baptisms of the mercy-seat

Whence those redeemed from sin to Heaven aspire.

The peace of righteousness none can gainsay;

Beauty of holiness men must confess.

Surely from what we see of those who pray

And serve God honestly (though none the less

The hypocrite may have his unctuous day)

True piety's the Way of Blessedness.

Unrest

A weary rider, glancing down an aisle
Of blossom-dappled orchard, spied outstretched
All in the sweet and slumbrous noonday light
A youth reposing on the cool green grass
Under a clustered bough, and he could hear
The drowsy murmur of enamored bees
About the dainty blossoms cream and pink.
The rider thought "What perfect rest!" and passed
Along the glowing road. The youth, a poet,
Watching the loosened petals drifting down
Silently all about him on the grass,
Thus mused, in somewhat of unhappy mood:

"Unrest—unrest! From wintry solstice come,
The sun that coaxed these blossoms to the boughs
Will hasten them to fruit without delay;
The fruit will ripen hour by hour, will fall,
Be gathered; autumn winds will roughly strip
These branches of their foliage, and the sun
In time will wheel again to other climes;
The ichor of these trees will ebb; this grass
Change emerald for a sad and russet hue;
Keen blasts will whistle, and the barren twigs
Will whiten with a chill and muffling snow;
And then in time the spring will breathe again
Upon the scene, and summer will return.
Unrest—unrest! There's not for anything,
From sun and moon and stars to floating moths,
Perfect repose. Unceasing as the tides
Of ocean, all things move unto a law
That knows no fraction of a moment's rest.

That filmy cloud that canopies with pearl
These burgeoned sprays will in due time descend
Upon them in swift showers, whose drops will be
Redrawn invisibly into the blue
To form a pearly cloud again, again
To be dashed down in showers, or to be fused
By lightning in a fierce and riving bolt.
Hidden among those blossoms is a nest
Wherefrom wind-cradled fledglings soon will peep
Upon a wondrous wide and azure world.
A little later and their glinting wings
Will skim tempestuous seas in migrant flight
For the antipodes. Wars rage, men fall
By thousands and, intrenched in bloody soil,
Are soon forgot; new generations wage
Life's endless strife; and for their hungry tongues
The cattle and the sheep that gently browse
On sunny hills and meadows must be slain.
The secret of this mystery has not been
And may not be revealed. We only know
That he who seeks for rest, for quittance from
The inexorable universal law
Is buffeted into the stream again
And hurried onward. Could the rest be found
For which man sighs, he soon would cry to heaven
For respite from its gloom."

The poet wrote
His thoughts in song, adding prophetic view
Of life beyond the grave—the perfect rest
Of energy subservient to God's will.
That song found lodgment in the mind of one
Who had blasphemed the maker of the heavens
And earth for that there is no rest for man;
And he, no longer recreant, found repose
In yielding to the universal law.

I Would that I Could Quite Forget

I would that I could quite forget
One love of days gone by,
Would that, without the least regret,
Without the lightest sigh,
One form, one voice, one name might be
Forever nothing more to me.

I would that I might never hear
A voice again like hers,
For O, that tone, so strangely dear,
All sad remembrance stirs—
Remembrance that in anguish saith
There is a sadder thing than death.

I would that I might never see
Such eyes as hers again,
For eyes like hers awake in me
A madding, nameless pain—
A pain that longs to tell in tears
How I have loved her all these years.

Easter Lilies

Winter is gone, and yet in sunless places
Snow-wraiths of Christmas lurked till yesterday—
Pale stragglers from that pageant far away.
Down cloudy ways one wind another chases,
Whistling mad ditties in averted faces.
Blue lakes of sky to beaches pearly gray
Run brightly dimpling, where flotillas gay
With silken sails leave foam in flying, traces.
Wild lights and sounds are hovering everywhere,
Preluding some mysterious revelation.
My mocking bird's one song a thrilling trill is.
He sees a spirit in the ambient air
Sprinkling elixir for the transmutation
Of resurrected leaves to Easter lilies.

Easter Advent

It was a stormy night in early spring.
Long after sunset pale-green rifts of light
Burned in the west, changing to vitreous white,
And when these faded darkness was a thing
Strangely portentous. There went whirring wing
Low in the air of birds in furious flight—
Wild fowls blown from their courses in the night.
It was a night for spectral imaging.
A sinless maiden in her chamber high
That Easter advent midnight heard a call:
Arise! arise! And startled from her bed
She saw a glory break along the sky;
It lit with flame the cross upon her wall,
And through the splendor crimson rain was shed.

Remembrance

I think that we retain of our dead friends
And absent ones no general portraiture;
That perfect memory does not long endure,
But fades and fades until our own life ends.
Unconsciously, forgetfulness attends
That grief for which there is no other cure,
But leaves of each lost one some record sure,—
A look, an act, a tone,—something that lends
Relief and consolation, not regret.
Even that poor mother mourning her dead child,
Whose agonizing eyes with tears are wet,
Whose bleeding heart cannot be reconciled
Unto the grave's embrace,—even she shall yet
Remember only when her babe first smiled!

"Our American God, Hustle"---Howells

All things that follow Nature's course take time.
There is no haste with them, from suns to seeds,
From star-births to earth's little greening weeds—
No haste—no leaping of the law sublime
Whose promise is Eternity! The crime
Of haste is man's, who, trampling on law, pleads
God's ignorance of what the future needs.
And for some purpose God endures the mime.
God of our nobler fathers, I adore Thee!
Too late I live to dedicate my ways
To Thee divinely, and I can restore Thee
Only a starving soul, but that with praise
That I have set no other god before Thee,
And have despised the Moloch of my days.

When I Consider All the Evil Done

I.

When I consider all the evil done
By that strange fiend born of the fume still—
The crime, the wretchedness, the shame, the ill,
The dreadful ending of lives well begun,
The pitiful agony of many a one,
The anguish of desire bereft of will,
The friendly hand insanely moved to kill—
I can but feel that of all devils none
Has so cursed earth with sorrow. One I know
Who fought for years (trust me, I know him well)
That demon in his soul to overthrow,
And by God's grace he did that demon quell.
And he can tell you surely who hath woe;
And you—say not to him there is no hell!

II.

How fatuous is the habit of potation!
Yet precious to the palate is good wine!
When one has a choice friend with whom to dine
There are few pleasures like free bibulation!
But he who pours wine freely makes libation
To that which will reward his spirit fine,
His wit, his fancy, and his grace divine,
Inevitably with sore desecration.
Holy George Herbert said "stay at the third"
(Third glass, not bottle), for a siren's call
Tempting to dangerous depths may then be heard.
I find it better not to imbibe at all—
Better for happy thought, good deed, sane word—
The treacherous imp that lurks in alcohol.

Sleep's Lullaby

Dear Sleep, thou art my mercifullest friend.
When, tired of all, nightly I come to thee
Thou art so patient and so good to me.
How gently do thy faithful hands extend
The old sweet welcome, motherly, and mend
My broken toys of hope, while at thy knee
I quite forget the hurtful things to be.
And when I feel thee touch my brow and bend
To kiss mine eyes, I love to put my hand
Into thine own—to feel that thou art near—
To nestle closely to thy peaceful breast
And hear thy lullaby about that land
Sung of so softly, where there is no tear
And where the weary are for aye at rest.

A Boy in the Piney Woods

It was a frosty-cold midwinter night
Gleaming with stars. Through a pine-barren dark,
I traced a path until I came to mark
The sudden glimmer of a cabin light.
How many hearts have warmed at such a sight!
My startling herald was the watch-dog's bark.
An old man, bearded like a patriarch,
Stood silhouetted in the doorway bright
And welcomed me unto the wedding party
Noisy with fun at blind-man's buff and riddle
And all the romping game of life bucolic.
I heard the peals of laughter long and hearty,
I caught the lusty tuning of the fiddle.
And leaped the door-step, eager for the frolic.

A Country House in the South

The Indian summer sky is sapphirine,
The earth a lustrous opal, and on all
Is heavenly beauty. Windless trees let fall
Showers of leaves upon the grass yet green
About a mansion sheltered in between
Two hazy hills—an old colonial hall.
Deserted now, from drawing-room to stall
Darkened and silent. Here such life was seen
In other days as we may see no more—
The stately courtesy, the gallant air,
The fireside grace, the feast, the minuet.
I force the battered, cobwebbed oak door,
And evening sunshine gilds the dusty stair
Where ghosts are said to walk in beauty yet.

In the Organ-Loft with a Poetess

It is a memory now—that vespers hour
Among the singers in the organ-loft—
The tinted twilight, the perfume, the soft
Blue cloud of incense, the rich volute flower
Of massive capitals, and the music shower
That fell from orient pipes in luminous rain
Upon our spirits; and there was one strain
That seemed to touch her as with heavenly power—
One chord antiphonal that died away
To purest silence, while her lashes met
And parted like the wings of butterflies
On evening flowers; so gentle was the sway
Of chastened fancy. There is with me yet
The dreadful influence of those charmed eyes.

The Old Guard

Summer is routed from her rosy plains.
The splendid queen with colors flying fled
Far to the south, leaving her legions dead
Upon the fields all in the dismal rains.
The minstrels of her camp most plaintive strains
Piped as they flew; then vandal armies spread
About the hills their tattered tents of red
And gold and purple, and their gaudy trains
Usurped the valleys, firing as they went,
Till halted by a cordon of grim pines
That would not yield nor furl their banners green.
Wounded they fought and moaned, though well-nigh
spent.
With blood-drops trickling down their chevron vines
They fought and stood—the Old Guard of their
queen.

"Time Brings Roses"

When from my mountain-top of years I gaze
Backward upon the scenes that I have passed,
How pleasant is the view! and yet how vast
The deserts where I thirsted many days!
There, where now hangs that blue and shimmering
haze,
And there, and there, my lot with pain was cast,
Hopeless and dark; but always at the last
Deliverance came, from unexpected ways.
And now all past grief is as but a dream:
Yet even now there loom before my path
Shadows whose gloomy portent checks my breath.
But shadows are not always what they seem—
God's love sometimes appears to be his wrath,
And his best gift is the white rose of death.

America

Thou beautiful and glorious!—on thy brow
Beams the resplendence of thy noble birth.
Thy beauty and thy glory bring thee now
Tribute from all the diadems of earth.
Dark was the night when Freedom bade thee live,
And Hope upheld thee, shedding radiant tears
And praying for thee, O superlative
Among the revelations of the years!

They called thee liberty. There was a hush
Among the kingdoms when that name was heard—
That name which, rising with a luminous flush,
Gleamed rocket-like—a splendid, brightening word—
Rifting the night with white and crimson bars,
And, poisoning heavenward, blossomed into stars.

Saddle-Bags of Gold

In bridle-path days, when steam was unknown,
A horseman rode into a forest alone.
Through the wonderful Land of the Sky rode he,
From North Carolina to Tennessee.
He bestrode a strong horse, and he went withal
Well armed with pistols and powder and ball,
For bloody highwaymen were none too few
In the laurel dells of the mountains blue.
Through the gloom of the forest this traveler rode
Each day from the dawn till the sunset glowed,
When, seeking for rest from his journey sore,
He drank from the gourd at some cabin door.

Again he would travel far into the night
In vain keeping watch for some settler's light,
And doubly alert, though weary and cold,
For he rode with his saddle-bags full of gold.
And day after day his journey he kept,
And night after night he uneasily slept,
For his treasure was great, and the charge that lay
Upon him he honored in ancient way—
The charge he honored, though not from a sense
Of punishment or of recompense

By One who watches, for heaven and hell
Were myths to this honest Infidel.

It was autumn. Who knows what a splendid domain is
The realm of the Blue Ridge and great Alleghanies—
How wildly romantic—what lights and what shades
Play over the scene—how the green summer fades
Like a veil blown aside to reveal magic things
Unspeakably grand—how the water-fall sings
To the cliff, and the cliff to the far sky of blue—
He may know what enchantment this horseman rode
through.

In the morning the valleys were lakelets of mist;
The tree-tops were isles in a haze amethyst;
At noon the bright woodpecker shot like a flash
To the green of the pine from the crimson red ash;
In the afternoon sunshine the bronze lizard played
On the vine of the moonseed; the bear unafraid
Loped over the trail; and as evening drew nigh
The horseman heard often the panther's sharp cry.
One evening at sunset, just when the last gleam
Was gliding the mountain-tops, at a swift stream
His horse with an eagerly impatient lip
Was flirting the brink, when all suddenly—zip!
A bullet half parted the rein. At a leap
The streamlet was cleared, for the spur was sunk deep.
And fast over pebbles that clattering rolled
The horseman went flying for life with his gold.

He rode till his beast made a staggering pace,
When he paused, with no hope of discerning a place
Of refuge—no sign of man's home was in sight,
And cold grew the north wind and black grew the
night.

Then slowly ascended a great gibbous moon
Up the east, like a luminous wind-blown balloon,
Which was caught in an ocean of cloud, and whose glow
Was drowned in the deepening turbulent flow.

He hopelessly peered in the fathomless dark
Below him. His eyes caught a scintillant spark,
And he gazed and it shone, and he gazed and he knew
That a cabin was there; and he gave a halloo,
Which was answered in time, but so faintly, he feared
'Twas reverberant echo. The horse, surer-eared,
Loudly whickered, and soon—through what perii
Heaven knows—

They stood at a door where a tall figure rose
And returned his salute; but the welcome was rough.
'Twas permission to rest though, and that was enough;
So by light of a torch the poor beast was made snug.
"You are kind, very kind." The reply was a shrug.

A grim old colossus, with shadow gigantic
That leaped here and there like a great specter frantic,
The traveler followed. On entering the cabin
He shudderingly thought—what a fit place to stab in!
An old hag of ninety was crouched by a fire,
Resenting encroachment with evident ire
Till her eyes, with that furtive glint solely a hag's,
Grew agleam at the sight of the guest's saddle-bags!
The man, with shock hair and piratical beard,
Had but one eye, a fierce one that fiendishly leered,
And that eye seemed to glare with the gleam of the
hag's

When he covertly glanced at the full saddle-bags.
"We was 'bout eatin' supper," the host grumly said,
And with this invitation to table he led.

A tallow-dip dripping the crone brought and sat
With tremulous fingers, and mumbled thereat.
"Why this," said the guest, feigning ease, "is good
cheer."

"Yes, if you can eat 'possum and drink 'simmon beer,"
The cyclops replied as he kicked at a hound —
One dog of a score that went skulking around.
That night, having talked till the fire had burned low,
The stranger, all weary, was anxious to go
To the bed which the crone in a corner had spread,
But he felt of his dubious companions a dread.—
Many a throat had been slit for a fortune of gold.
Should these know what was his, would that giant
withhold?

He cautiously felt of his weapons, and thought
If his life were at stake it should dearly be bought.
Deep silence ensued, and the owl's cry was heard,
He felt strangely thrilled by the ominous bird.
A dog howled. He wondered if ever indeed
Wise men had to such simple things given heed.
And he doubtless had sat there till morning light
shone,

But the grim giant, speaking in most solemn tone,
Said: "*Stranger, me'n mother afore gwine to bed
Has prar. Will ye jine us?*" The stranger's fear fled.
He knelt in confusion. When called on to lead,
He stammered—"too weary, too tired, indeed"—
And he secretly smiled at his ludicrous care
When he heard that old Methodist wrestling with
prayer.

He slept e'en to snoring that night, and next day
Through the falling leaves peacefully went on his way.
But he questioned philosophy vainly to say
Why it was he *felt safe* with a man that would pray.

A Christmas Toast

Here's a round to thee, Dan Chaucer,
At the festal Christmas time.
Pledge me, poets—to the master
Of our gentle art of rime.

To the eldest of our brothers,
To the honor of his name,
To the sweetness of his spirit,
To the glory of his fame;

To that voice whose music echoes
All the centuries along,
Prophesying art triumphant
In eternity of song.

England! England! Awake!

England! England! arouse thee! awake!

Hear thy fair daughter, Atlantis call,
Mighty of olden days, turn thee and break
Shackles that cripple thee, fetters that gall,
Strike down the hands that would rob thee of glory,
Crush thy false sons to their suppliant knees.
Isle of heroic deeds, region of story,
Relight the beacons that silvered thy seas.

England! England! thou that hast led,
Guidoning civilization's advance,
Right or wrong, great were thy living and dead,
Splendid the blazonry of thy romance.
Rush to thy battlements, let not be furled
Banners disgraced by degenerate hands—
Flags that have gallantly circled the world—
Expectant of thee the new century stands.

England! England! summon the souls
Whose valor has gilded the heights of thy fame;
Pray guidance of them when thy martial drum rolls,
That honor alone may betrophy thy name.
Clasp hands with thy daughter; with her lead the way,
For the glory of God and humanity's sake,
To the honor and strength of a more righteous day.
England! England! Awake!

The Wanderer Back Home

Back in the Old North State,
Back to the place of his birth,
Back through the pines' colonnaded gate
To the dearest spot on earth.
No sweeter joy can a star feel
When into the sky it thrills
Than the rapture that wings a Tar Heel
Come back to his native hills.

From coast to mountain heights
Old North Carolina lies,
A cornucopia of delights
Under her summer skies,
And autumn gives rich treasure
To the overflowing horn,
Adding a juicy measure
Of grape and rye and corn.

In June a tree so fragrant
Scents the delicious air
That busiest bees grow vagrant
And doze in its blossoms fair.
"Persimmons!" the wanderer cries;
And along time's frosted track
The luscious purple fruit he spies,
And boyhood's days drift back!

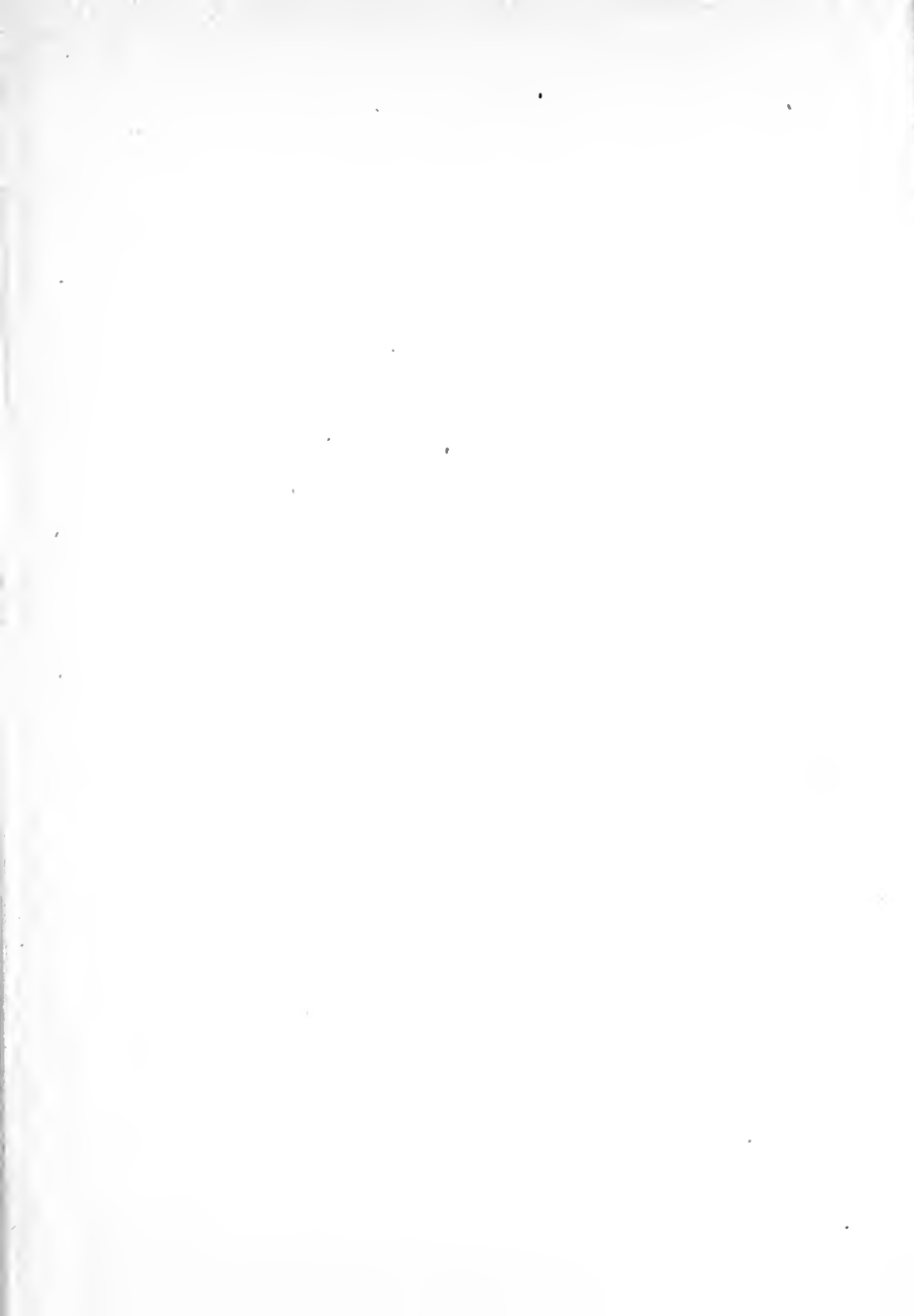
With fall comes the burst of the cartridge;
The squirrel and the rabbit are his;
Down tumbles the whirring partridge,
And the cook makes the wild duck siz;
But for these not so much does he care,
No matter how dainty the caters;
Just seat him fair in an old splint chair
And give him possum and taters.





Birthplace of John Henry Boner, Salem, N. C.

The following forty-three poems in this book are selected from "Whispering Pines," a volume of sixty-five pieces published in 1883, since which time, during a residence in New York City most of the other poems have been written.



WHISPERING PINES

Tessellae

Thou sanctuary of my soul,
Chaste temple of poetic art,
Built from the wrangling world apart
And sacred from the world's control—

Thou pearly palace pure and blest
Hid in the trees of Paradise,
With violet shade for weary eyes
And roseate avenues of rest—

Here where thy rainbowed fountains play
Among the myrtles where repose
The deathless images of those
Whose genius raised thee from the clay,

I come, full mindful that my days
Are numbered; that anear doth lurk
The night wherein no man can work—
I come—in reverence of the bays

That have been granted to the great
Whose feet have trod this holy place—
To leave some sign, some little trace,
Even but a pavement tessellate

Of verse that I have wrought in pain,
In pleasure, hope, despair, belief
And doubt, in joy and frenzied grief,
That I may not have lived in vain—

That some one, coming here some day
To pass a peaceful hour of thought,
In my mosaic simply wrought
Seeing some worthy work, may say:

God rest him in a nobler sphere,
Green be the boughs above his grave,
And over him sweet blossoms wave.
And I, though long, long dead, shall hear.

Moonrise in the Pines

The sultry day is ending,
The clouds are fading away,
Orange with purple is blending
And purple is turning to gray;
The gray grows darker and denser
Till it and the earth are one;
A star swings out like a censer,
And the brief warm night is begun.

The brown moth floats and poises
Like a leaf in the windless air;
Aroused by insect noises
The gray toad leaves his lair;
Sounding the dusk depth quickly
The bull-bats fall and rise,
And out of the grasses thickly
Swarm glistering fire-flies.

Now darkness heavy, oppressive
And silent completes the gloom.
The breathless night is excessive
With fragrance of perfume,
For the land is enmeshed and ablaze
With vines that blossom and trail,
Embanking the traveled ways
And festooning the fences of rail.

Afar in the southern sky
Heat-lightning flares and glows,
Vividly tinting the clouds that lie
At rest with a shimmer of rose—
Tremulous, flitting, uncertain,
As a mystical light might shine
From under an ebon curtain
Before a terrible shrine.

And the slumbrous night grows late.
The midnight hush is deep.
Under the pines I wait
For the moon; and the pine trees weep
Great drops of dew, that fall
Like footsteps here and there,
And they sadly whisper and call
To each other high in the air.

They rustle and whisper like ghosts,
They sigh like souls in pain,
Like the movement of stealthy hosts
They surge, and are silent again.
The midnight hush is deep,
But the pines—the spirits distress—
They move in somnambulant sleep—
They whisper and are not at rest.

Lo! a light in the east opalescent
Softly suffuses the sky
Where flocculent clouds are quiescent,
Where like froth of the ocean they lie—
Like foam on the beach they crinkle
Where the wave has spent its swirl—
Like the curve of a shell they dimple
Into iridescent pearl.

And the light grows brighter and higher
Till far through the trees I see
The rim of a globe of fire
That rolls through the darkness to me,
And the aisles of the forest gleam
With a splendor unearthly, that shines
Like the light of a lurid dream
Through the colonnaded pines.

Autumnal

The day is dark—the clouds hang low—
A strange funereal silence reigns,
Save the hoarse croaking of the crow
That on his lustier fellow gains.

I wander in the fields alone.
'Tis peace to hear the sougning pines
And the sad minor undertone
That runs along the sedgy lines.

'Tis peace to tread the withered grass,
To lean upon the lichen'd rail,
Or skirt the dusky bramble-mass
Whence whirs the sudden-startled quail—

To follow down into the wood
A darkling path where branches meet,
While softly in the solitude
The dead leaves rustle at the feet.

And thus by mystic silence zoned
Where none may hear outspoken care,
'Tis peace to hear one's own voice toned
Upon the somber, lonesome air.

If my heart pain me, or the gall
Of bitterness rise in my soul,
I brood not on my pangs and all
The ills that I cannot control.

Yet have done so—O have arrayed
Hot curses 'gainst the ruling stars,
Then compassed, foiled, and forced, have frayed
My very life against the bars.

But I was younger then than now.
We get some wisdom with the years,
And in captivity avow
The impotence of wrath and tears—

We learn humility's sweet strength—
The scourged soul learns to bear the rod—
And from such lessons comes at length
The righteous reverence of God.

So on a day like this, when drear
Against life's dull horizon looms
The melancholy mount, and sheer
Dejection dark beyond it glooms—

When wasted seems life's fountain-head,
When friend nor book a solace yields,
Better than popped chair or bed
It is to seek the open fields—

To walk beside a babbling brook,
Taste fragrant twigs, break sturdy thistle,
Turn the brown crumpled leaves and look
At the green moss beds, cut a whistle

From the bronzed reed, as when a boy.
Almost youth's light heart comes again.
We should know more of peaceful joy
If we took more the wind and rain.

Here, where a solitary dark
And scraggy locust grimly waves
Its ghastly arms, I pause and mark
Some briar-grown, long-neglected graves.

No breeze blows from the leaden sky,
And yet there is a saddening sound
That lingers like a stifled sigh
About this plot of sacred ground—

Faint tremulous echo of the sighs
That went to heaven when here were laid
To rest the folded hands and eyes
And over them these mounds were made.

Methinks I hear the songs they sung—
Old plaintive hymns—the simple prayer
So fervent, when the clods were flung
Upon the coffin lowered there.

Here stood the mourners, clad in black—
The pallid women weeping low—
Then in the evening silence back
To the hushed house they mutely go—

The house that stood on yonder hill,
Now gone, all gone, save towering high
One chimney, which is darkly still
Outlined against the wintry sky.

When summer toils among her sheaves
Here blooms in peace the pale wild rose—
Here drift the scarlet autumn leaves,
And here in winter drift the snows.

Here in the spring the blue-bell spires,
And lightly o'er the old gravestones
The jay-bird in the bamboo briars
Twits at the lorn dove's mournful tones.

But where are they who mourn these dead—
Who circled once that old home hearth?
God knows. Their tears may now be shed
In different quarters of the earth.

Death—death—the grave. Sometimes I feel.
When musing at a spot like this,
A wish—a longing wish to steal
Unto the dead—to find their bliss—

The bliss of that Eternal Rest
Emancipated souls must know.
We think them free, we call them blest,
We deem them happy. Are they so?

Vaguely and strangely we define
Unto ourselves what life must be
Beyond the waves of death, and pine
Sometimes to cross the unknown sea.

Each has his hope as each his creed,
Though faith of creed gives little scope
Unto the soul that would be freed
To realize its heavenly hope.

Some things we count as sure to find—
Atonement for our joyless years,
Affinities of heart and mind,
And recompense for all our tears,

Reunion with the loved and lost,
Revelment of the Almighty cause,
The Unknowable made plain—the cost
Of knowledge fixed by wondrous laws.

Howe'er it be, one thing I know:
There is a faith which hath sufficed
Men mourning in the land of woe—
A simple faith in Jesus Christ—

A faith confirmed by testing prayer
To minds yet great enough to guess
Such mysteries of earth and air
As science hath not dared confess.

Gather Leaves and Grasses

Gather leaves and grasses
Love, to-day,
For the autumn passes
Soon away.
Chilly winds are blowing.
It will soon be snowing.

Fill the vacant places
With them, dear,
And the empty vases.
Brown and sere
Sprays and leaves yet hold
Glints of summer's gold.

In the drear December
When it snows,
And the dying ember
Faintly glows,
Leaf and spray may bring
Thoughts of rosy spring.

Ah, we fondly cherish
Faded things
That had better perish.
Memory clings
To each leaf it saves.
Chilly winds are blowing,
It will soon be snowing
On our graves.

A Sketch

They sit on the porch together—father and daughter
fair—

On the porch of a rambling farm-house roofswept
by ancient trees,
And the old man, bearded and rough, plays with his
darling's hair,
Her head in his lap, while he listens to the hum of
his honey-bees.

The wind from the south blows softly, the sounds of
the farm are still,

The plows are dropped with their shining shares,
and the horses are loose in a field
Where they lazily crop in the cooling shade of sassa-
fras trees on a hill,
And orchards of apples and peaches warm sun-sweet
odors yield.

The bees fly swiftly in and out of the long old-fashion-
ed gums

And hurry over the blossoming weeds, for summer
is on the wane,
Already the autumn-call of the partridge up from the
stubble comes,
And the lightest wind blows golden pears from the
tree in the meadow-lane.

Hunting Muscadines

(A MEMORY OF BOYHOOD.)

Floating on the gentle Yadkin in an olden-time canoe,
Singing old plantation ballads—I and charming blue-
eyed Sue—

Blue-eyed, golden tress'd Sue.

Willows plume the shining river, and the birch a
shadow flings
Far across its dimpled bosom. Down the shore her
laughter rings—

Merry, rippling laughter rings.

Pendent dew-drops glitter brightly in the overhanging
vines

Laden with a luscious treasure of large purple musca-
dines—

Ripe, delicious muscadines.

Sweetest grapes that ever clustered—purple juice on
mouth and breast—

Pearly teeth and love and laughter! Fonder love was
ne'er confessed—

Sweeter lips were never pressed.

Now we row from dappled shadows underneath the
tangled vines

Up the sunny stream where all the radiance of the
morning shines

O the purple muscadines!

Years may pass, but I can never cease to dream of
blue-eyed Sue

And the morning on the Yadkin in the olden-time
canoe—

Blue-eyed, golden tress'd Sue.

We Walked Among the Whispering Pines

It was a still autumnal day—
So sadly still and strangely bright—
The hectic glow of quick decay
Tinged everything with lovely light.
It warmly touched the fragrant air
And fields of corn and crumbling vines
Along the golden Yadkin, where
We walked among the whispering pines.

Alas, that tender hectic glow
Shone in her gentle, pallid face,
And none save God in heaven could know
My agony to see its trace—
To watch those fatal roses bloom
Upon her cheeks—red, cruel signs—
But all of love, not of the tomb,
We spoke among the whispering pines.

Ah, fatal roses—never yet
Have they deceived. She drooped and died.
We parted and we never met
Again; but often at my side
An angel walks—her step I know—
A viewless arm my neck entwines.
O angel love, so years ago
We walked among the whispering pines.

The Silver Wedding

From the castellate cliffs of the high Alleghenies,
Where morning a mist of enchantment distils
And the light of the evening a glorified rain is,
The lordly Potomac comes down through the hills.

A mantle of green brightly drapes his brave shoulder,
And gaily he sings as he gracefully strides
With foam-plashing footsteps from boulder to boulder,
Awaking the echoes of dark mountain sides.

He lingers a while in the shadows that hover
About the Blue Ridge; then with passionate start
He bounds with the blissful delight of a lover,
For something has touched the gay cavalier's heart.

A song he has heard—far away—far and low—a
Soft cadence blown up from some dim dreamy dale.
He has heard the sweet voice of the fair Shenandoah,
Who sings in Virginia's ambrosial vale.

He listens enraptured, then down through the passes
Of granite he hurries with jubilant feet,
And under red blossoms and over green grasses
He carols, the nymph of the valley to meet.

And she, Shenandoah, the blue-veined and blushing,
Instinctively feels that a lover draws near,
And, feigning to linger, goes girlishly rushing
To see him in secret where he may appear.

Now naught but a little blue mountain divides her
From him whose fast-coming she wishes afraid.
Her heart, like a virgin coquette's, gently chides her,
And soft are the sighs of the venturesome maid.

They meet in an instant, the lord and the lady,
'Tis love at first sight—each the other invites,
And rushing together where nature has made a
Cathedral of rocky and towering heights

They wed with swift kisses and rapturous glancing,
And hushed are their voices and fond their embrace
As together they go through the mountain gate dancing,
She clinging to him and he kissing her face.

Time of Brought

Summer is raging in the South,
The great sun with his brazen mouth
Has breathed upon the land until
Each mountain stream and valley rill,
Like hottest tears, almost refuse
To flow; there are no cooling dews
To make the arid mornings bland—
The trees in drooping silence stand,
As if by some great power curst
And doomed to fade and die, as erst
The barren tree of Holy Land
Faded and died at God's command.

The tender flowers, like pious hearts
When tortured by scorn's ireful darts,
Fold their mute leaves, accept the doom,
And die in their own sweet perfume;
But, like the thing whose name it bears,
The tiger-lily little cares
How fiercely scorching sunlight glows,
And all the more serenely blows.
And while the daintier blossoms wilt,
Bowing their heads as if with guilt,
The sunflower, with calm, rustic grace,
Stares the hot god right in the face.

Among the trees about the lawn
Birds whistle for a while at dawn,
The locust then trills out a strain
With shrill and resonant refrain,
Singing his song till the sun is hid,
When the impatient katydid
Begins to pipe her fretful tune
Unto the fair disdainful moon.

All night the air is hot and still;
The song of some lone whippoorwill
Is heard until the sad refrain
Glides from the ear into the brain,
When, stealing through the rich perfume
That languishes about the room,
Breathed from magnolia's creamy bloom,
Sleep comes with all her mystic charms
And woos the spirit to her arms.

The Moon-Loved Land

No lovelier song was ever heard
Than the notes of the Southern Mocking-Bird
When leaf and blossom are wet with dew
And the wind breathes low the long night through.
O music for grief!— It comes like a song
From a voice in the stars; and all night long
The notes flow. But you must live in the South,
Where the clear moon kisses with large cool mouth
The land she loves, in the secret of night,
To hear such music—the soul-delight
Of the Moon-Loved Land.

When gentle twilight softly closes
The door of day, and the sun-fed roses
Lavishly sweeten the air, you will hear
That wonderful song—now low—now clear—
Till the silvery moon flushed red goes down
On silent country and sleeping town.
O the lovers are fond in the groves of the South
When the large moon kisses with grand sweet mouth
The land she loves; and love has romance
And is more than vow and wedding and dance
In the Moon-Loved Land.

Ah, Pictured Leaves

(Suggested by looking over a portfolio of music in the parlor of an old Southern hotel.)

Ah pictured leaves with edges torn
Which on this old piano lie,
Whose crimson cloth is threadbare worn,
I touch you with a mournful sigh.

Old songs are ringing in my brain,
I vaguely hum forgotten tunes.
I stand and turn the leaves again
Through the long summer afternoons.

Fond memory of those golden days
Awakes, and once again I see
The girls who sang these tender lays
And played these plaintive airs for me.

One wears the rose I gave to her—
The rose she took with witching jest—
And while she sings I feel as 'twere
My heart upon her heavenly breast.

I feel the southern zephyr sweet
Blow through the latticed colonnade,
And hear the steps of lovers' feet
Retreating through the scented shade.

Enchanting creature! Left alone,
My wild, first passion I declare.
The music dies to monotone
Along the keys. O fresh and fair

The girlish face that lifts to mine
With parted lips and flower-like eyes
And lets me drink of love divine
Till all my soul in rapture dies.

Then life was full—full to the brim—
A thrilling ecstasy—a tune
Charming the angels to the rim
Of heaven at sunset; and the moon

Was my own love—all night to lie
And gaze upon her splendid grace
And dream how grand for love to die,
Some Roland, in grim danger's face.

But where the girls that used to play
And sing the songs we loved so well?
Though we may journey many a way,
We meet them not—no one can tell.

Do they yet twine the silken curls
That fell o'er blushing shoulders bare
And do they, as when they were girls,
Put summer roses in their hair?

Do they sometimes recall the past
With songs they sung in happier days,
And sometimes think of eyes that cast
Into their own such tender rays?

They vanished with the early dreams
That made romance of everything.
We parted, like the sparkling streams
That from the forest laughing spring

And never, never meet again,
And nevermore flow clear and free,
And leave at last the tranquil plain
To mingle with the unpeaceful sea.

Song of the Old Mill-Wheel

Morning comes with sudden splendor, rosy glow and
odor-laden,

And awaking in the ferny dell I hear my Echo
Sprite,

Where the Night has slid from covert like a pale af-
frighted maiden,

Leaving splendid sparkling jewels on the grasses in
her flight.

O! my maiden, swift and sly,

Echo'll tell me by and by

Of your meeting by the meadow when' the moon was
in the sky.

O the birds are singing gaily in the boughs that bend
above me,

And the bees are stealing honey from the blossoms
all aglow,

And the fitting darting swallow-flights of sunlight
seem to love me,

For they follow me around and round as merrily I
go,

While the lazy miller stands

In the door with idle hands,

Puffing pearly rings of smoke and gazing on his fruit-
ful lands.

Now the hush of noon is heavy, for the sun is whitely
burning,
And the woods and fields are noiseless, and the
barren road is still,
But the silver sparkling water splashing on me while
I'm turning
Lulls to sleep the mealy miller in his little clacking
mill.

O the world may have its way,
But I've often heard him say
That he'd rather be a miller than a king with courtiers
& gay.

Evening shadows lengthen slowly, and again the birds
are singing,
And the mowers in the meadow hang their scythes
upon the tree,
And Marie is milking Daisy, and the evening bells are
ringing,
And homeward through the shimmer goes the latest
laden bee.

O the sky is tender blue,
Pink, and red, and purple too,
And the pigeons in the gable ruff their irises and coo.

Night is falling, gently falling, and the silver stars
are shining,
And the leaves are freshened sweetly by the winds
that softly blow,
And I would that all were happy, but there must be
some repining,
And with some it is the future and with some the
long ago.

Ho—my Echo—go to—rest
In the—silence—you—love best—
For the—long—day—is—done,—and—the—moon—is
—in—the—west.

The Sweet Little Fool

(THE LAMENT.)

I was a fool!
When he looked at me I hung my head
And caught at a blossoming weed.
When he spoke I felt my face turn red
As if it would bleed,
And when I dared look up again
He had turned the bend in the lane.

I was a fool—
For I waited there by the field of clover
Trying my love with a daisy,
And softly saying over and over
“Surely he must be crazy—
Not to see that I love him!” Why
Did I let him pass! O, because I—
I was a fool—that’s why.
Blow sweet wind, he will come again
And I will be walking in the lane.

I was a fool!
O shame, shame—I burn with shame.
Why was I so silly?
Again I waited, and he came
Riding his cream-white filly
And whistling, and when he tipt his hat
I laughed and said “O how glossy and fat
Is your pretty filly.”
He only blushed. No wonder—for me,
That a country girl so forward should be.

(THE SEQUEL.)

Last night when the moon hung low
Across the field of clover,
She whispered, "I love you so
It is sweet to say it over
And over again, close to your face,
But I have neither beauty or grace.
I can't believe that you love me. I—
But if you do, now, tell me why."

He answers, as he gently draws
Her lips to his. "I love you because
You're a sweet little fool."

Midsummer Night

Ah what a perfect night is this
For sauntering slowly hand in hand—
Under moon-silvered leaves to stand
And touch lips brimming with a kiss,

While the warm night air, rich with scent
Of white magnolia and red rose,
Languidly sweetens as it blows
Through the low limbs above you bent.

O Love, Depart

O love, depart,
Mislead my heart
No more, I do implore you.
I love your chains
But fear your pains—
I dread you and adore you.

Your voice is sweet,
Your touch replete
With all alluring blisses,
Your languid eye
Bewitching sly
And heaven is in your kisses.

You smile, and lo,
The heart's aglow
With radiant passion flowers.
But, ah, your frown
Doth shatter down
Their leaves like autumn showers.

No, Love, depart,
I'll trust my heart
No more unto your keeping.
Though some you bless
With happiness,
You always leave me weeping.

There's a Lone, Cool Nook

There's a lone, cool nook, where the shade is deep,
And the waves of a river softly run
To the shore where odorous muskrats creep
From dripping roots when the day is done.
Between green rushes and silver reeds,
Where dragon-flies are ever at play,
A winding path to the water leads,
And there a boat lies rocking away—
Rocking, rocking, at rest and asleep
In the lone, cool nook where the shade is deep.

When the day is hot you may lie at rest
In the boat and dream till the sunlight fades,
While the lulling sounds that the ear loves best
Are whispered by waves and the long reed blades;
And a vine with trumpet blossoms of red
Is lightly flung on the branches high
Of a leaning tree—in such a bed,
Forgetting the world, you may idly lie
Rocking, rocking, at rest and asleep,
In the lone, cool nook where the shade is deep.

At night, when the sky is full of stars,
When shadowy birds flit down the shore,
And the water-snake glides to the sandy bars,
You may touch the waves with a noiseless oar
Till you float far out on the shining stream,
Where winds from the corn-land freshly blow,
And there you may gently drift and dream
With stars above you and stars below—
Drifting, drifting, may dream and rest
On the peaceful river's cool, sweet breast.

Going Home

Sailing some dark tempestuous main—
Beset by storm or hurricane
That threatens to engulf and wreck—
The sailor on the wave-washed deck
Thinks of the home-port far away

Where late his vessel, anchored fast
Within a little tranquil bay,

Knew nothing of the tattering blast,
But rocked upon the peaceful tide

While suns came up and moons went down,
And furled its idle sails beside

A moss-roofed idle town.

So one who leaves his boyhood's home,
About the wretched world to roam,
Led off by visions born of hope
Inspired by youth's kaleidoscope,
Will often turn—his visions fled,
His hopes like storm-beat blossoms dead—
Toward that place of all the blest,
Old home, the haven of sweet rest,
And go, though some forget to meet

The wanderer with kindly look,
To find once more and gladly greet
Loved ones in mothernook.

How Oft I've Trod That Shadowy Way

Full many a peaceful place I've seen,
But the most restful spot I know
Is one where thick dark cedars grow
In an old graveyard cool and green.

The way to the sequestered place
Is arched with boughs of that sad tree,
And there the trivial step of glee
Must sober to a pensive pace.

How oft I've trod that shadowy way
In bygone years—sometimes while yet
The grass with morning dew was wet,
And sometimes at the close of day,

And sometimes when the summer noon
Hung like a slumberous midnight spell—
Sometimes when through the dark trees fell
The sacred whiteness of the moon.

Then is the hour to wander there,
When moonlight silvers tree and stone
And in the soft night wind is blown
Ethereal essence subtly rare.

At such an hour the angels tread
That hollowed spot in stoles as white
As lilies, and in silent flight
They come and go till dawn is red.

The Cliff

(PILOT MOUNTAIN, SURREY COUNTY, NORTH
CAROLINA.)

See yonder cliff—how ghastly bare.
Lightning has torn its rugged face.
It looks like one whom cursed care
Has robbed of every peaceful grace.

Yet how sublime! How proudly still!
Barren and thunder-beat and drear,
Behold the unconquerable will,
Dead to emotion—love or fear—

Unchanging when the rising sun
Gilds its high head with heavenly light,
Or when the red moon breaks upon
Its brow across the gulf of night.

The Dreamer

He was unequal to the strife—
Freely he owns and feels no shame—
So from the battle-line of life
Idling along the fields he came.

A green-banked stream in summer-time—
A lonely place along the shore—
A flowery mountain-side to climb—
Give either, and he asks no more.

He laughs with others at the clown
That bears his name—the counterfeit—
While from the clouds his soul looks down
Impatiently and calls to it.

Enthusiasm

An hour of perfect happiness
Makes one forget the load of care
He has been bearing everywhere,
And he foresees no more distress.

Credulous still, though oft betrayed,
The day is glorified to him
An orb'd epoch, round whose rim
Coronal beauty is displayed.

He smiles to think that he could hate,
And grieves to think what hate has done,
Regrets hot words, and hopes that none
Have been remembered. All elate—

The pain of pleasure in his throat—
Tiptoe he prophesies life shall
Henceforward be a madrigal
Of peace, with no discordant note.

His nobler sense vanguards his pride,
Which, flattered to a loving mood,
Would found a gentle brotherhood
Of men that fate could not deride.

Arcadian beauty to discuss
With faith sublime he goes, returning
With shame and indignation burning,
Torn by the beasts of Ephesus.

Rehoboth Beach

For hours and hours to watch the wonderful sea
Is perfect peace—to lie upon the sand,
Sieve the clean crystals with a leisure hand,
And dream of things long ages hence to be—

Of things to be when we and all we know
Shall have been laid away in silent graves
As much forgotten as the broken waves
That murmured here a hundred years ago.

Thou visible Eternity, O Sea!
Thou emblem of the shoreless! On thy shore
The generations tread and are no more,
But none save God has ever trod on thee.

Thou art, like God, a refuge for the soul
Sick of uncertain creeds cramped rites demanding.
The peace thou givest passeth understanding—
Thy benediction breaks the world's control.

This Sabbath morning I have found in thee
A consolation I have needed long.
Thou hast revived me—thou hast made me strong—
Thou hast revealed God's Spirit unto me.

The Song Never Sung

There's a song to be sung in the dying
Still hour of the twilight, and only
To such as are hopeless and lonely,
To such as are sad and heart-sore—
A song to be sung low and sweetly
To such as have yielded completely
To doleful despair—to those lying
Forlorn, with a future no more.

'Tis a song in whose magical measure
Must flow dulcet solace for broken
And love-haunted spirits awoke in
The desolate realm of dead years
'Mid the ruins of dreams—a song singing
Of heaven over hell and the springing
Of hope from the ashes of pleasure
And joy from the anguish of tears.

It must not be sung here; but when slowly
Your last sun declines, leaving splendid
The highway to God where have wended
The lost of your life, you may hear
From some cloud-cliff empurpled a song that
Your sorrow had longed for so long that
You'll sink in a rapture too holy
For all the sweet strength of a tear.

The Light of Aidenn

No more, no more, sad memory, speak no more.

Those days were happy ones, but they are lost.
They stand like friends upon a fading shore

Waving farewells to one on billows tossed
Toward another world. And I could weep

My soul to agony, had I not learned
To force regretful tears back to the deep

Whence they would rise. Alas, tears backward
turned

Burn as they flow, and leave their livid trace
Upon the sufferer's calm unflinching face.

Hope's fluttering pennant catches on the wave

Light from the sunset of the past. The flower
That blossoms in the grass upon the grave
Breathes of a life beyond death's dreadful power.

Music and poesy transport the soul

Sometimes almost—almost—within the veil.

I know the unsounded stream doth darkly roll

Between us and Beulah, but I hail

With fixed faith a light on Aidenn's shore.

No more, no more, sad memory, speak no more.

City Bells

A sound of music gently swells
Along the breeze—it comes and goes
Faintly, and now to clamor grows.
The bells are ringing—Sabbath bells.

From belfries dedicate to saints,
And steeples called by holy names
Of men who died for Christ in flames,
The music bursts, and flies and faints
Far up in air, along the blue
Still shore of heaven, and into spray
Of silvery silence dies away.....

Now, slowly, softly breaking through
The mist that veils departed years
With half-shut eyes I dimly see
A picture dear as life to me—
The place where I was born appears—
A little town with grassy ways
And shady streets, where life hums low,
(A place where world-worn men might go
To calmly close their fading days.)

One simple spire points to the skies
Above the leafy trees. I hear
The old Moravian bell ring clear,
But see no more—tears fill my eyes.

No more have I in that dear place
A home; and saddest memories cling—
Ah, sad as death—to everything
About it. But by God's good grace,
Where'er it be my fate to die,
Beneath those trees in whose dark shade
The first loved of my life are laid
I want to lie.

Broken and Desolate

There are some scenes that we should not
Revisit, though most dear they be—
Some things we nevermore should see—
Some places that should be forgot.

One such not long ago I went
To look upon in mournful mood,
Awhile about the place to brood—
The old home where my youth was spent.

My very footfall on the floor
Was unfamiliar. It did seem
To me like walking in a dream—
All sadly altered—home no more—
A shattered house—a fallen gate—
A missing tree—red barren clay
Where flowers once stood in bright array—
All changed—all broken—desolate.

But when I came to stand within
The room where summer moons had shed
Soft luster round my dreamful bed
When my young life was free from sin—

The room wherein ambrosial hours
Were spent in cool and blissful rest
While gleaming stars went down the west
And all the land was sweet with flowers—

I could no more—I pressed my face
Against the silent wall, then stole
Away in agony of soul,
Regretting I had seen the place.

Chief Joseph, the Nez Perce

Were my hand master of the marble art
Given by the high gods, it were in my heart
To sculpture something that I saw last night—
Something sublime, yet a most tearful sight.

Were you descended from a sire whose grave
Lies by his father's father's—wave on wave
Of sacred mounds ancestral, centuries old,
Through some green valley by time's long tide rolled,
That valley yours, your birthplace, and as far
As you might mark the rising of a star
The land all yours by blest inheritance,
And there your loved ones—not the friends of chance,
But like yourself, of noble blood—the sod
Sacred to them as you—your God their God—
Traditions dear alike to them and you
Making a stainless history, such as few
Nations have had, save in great days of old
When men loved valiant honor more than gold;
Were you so honored and so well possessed
Of all to make the lot of mortal blessed,
What would you do if you were forced to give
That spot where you had prayed in peace to live,
That home where you had hoped in peace to die,
To some Invader, conquered by a lie—
Ay, lies, lies, lies, unblushing, shameless lies,
Base, cowardly lies—deceived and then betrayed,
Robbed of your birthright, treated as a slave,
Your kith and kin most mercilessly slayed,
And desecration round your mother's grave!

Last night I saw one who had suffered all
Such outrage, and assembled hundreds there
Heard his sad story. Women's eyes let fall
Quick quivering tears at thought of his despair,
And many a bearded lip pressed clenched teeth
To keep sharp curses in unspoken sheath.

Thank God he did interpret my long look
Into his eyes of splendor when I took
His kingly hand; and in that look I know
My whole soul shone like sunlight over snow.

Ay, were I master of that wondrous art
Loved by the high gods, it were in my heart
To make mute marble tell the unlanguage'd grief
Of noble Joseph, the Nez Percé chief.
Then would I crave a gift like that was won
For Galatea by Pygmalion,
And Liberty should veil her crimsoned cheek
To see the eternal marble move and speak.

The Stormy Day

A branch of dead leaves plashes the pane.
It is tossed and swayed by the wind and the rain.

A fair young woman with folded hands
And tearful eyes at a window stands.

Within the light is tender and warm.
Without is the dark and surging storm.

The dead leaves splash the dripping pane,
And she murmurs over and over again

"Ah, God, to think that my love lies dead
And the pitiless storm beats over his head."

The dark day dies in storm and rain,
And the dead leaves splash the window-pane.

Exequy on the Death of *** Medora H.**

At last the patient sufferer drew
Long, peaceful breath, and they who wept
Felt the Great Mystery, and knew
God's hand had touched her and she slept.

Whate'er they hoped, they knew no more,
Nor through the tears of anguish shed
Beheld the Angel at the door
Departing with the happy dead.

O love of God, the days are dark,
O Christ, the burden hard to bear,
But for one thought—some hour shall mark
The time when we may meet her there—

May see her walking with the blest
In bliss of which we had not dreamed,
Leaning upon her Savior's breast,
Singing Redeemed—redeemed—redeemed.

With Him Who Pities the Oppressed

Death—strangely new, though ever old!
The soul is in the eye to-day,
And hope drives lurking shades away—
To-morrow funeral bells are tolled.

And some yield bickeringly their breath
Because they leave a life of mirth,
But some, bowed down by woes to earth,
Smile when they hear the step of death.

Such have been given stones for bread,
Their days been cursed by cruel fates,
Yet through the far-off open gates
They see the sweet rest of the dead—

They see the rest, the long sweet rest
From hopeless anguish, tearful grief,
And know that they will find relief
With Him who pities the oppressed.

Where Are the Places that We See in Dreams?

Where are the places that we see in dreams—
Those lonely lands with nameless flowers and trees—
Dim, glimmering cliffs reflecting silvery beams,
And shadowy ships at rest on tideless seas?

Where are the purple islands that we see
Bathed in a splendid glow of sunset hues
And sail toward so fast and happily,
In phantom boats, while dancing Zephyr strews
Foam-flowers upon the waters as we fly!

Somewhere in those wide isles we think to lie
Under celestial trees in godlike ways,
Talking with old friends of remembered days
When life was sweet but for the certain sting
Of death, which we had thought a fearful thing.

Where are the marvelous palaces that rise
By silent waters in enchanted light,
Unto whose windows, with sweet sinless eyes,
Come faces that, alas, fade from the sight
While we enraptured gaze and think we know
Among them loved ones buried long ago?

Where are the halls through which grand music rings
While we in ecstasy step swiftly on
Through crystal corridors, surprised by wings
That lightly pass and softly touch upon
Our eager faces, then through portals bright
In far recesses vanish from the sight,
And as they fade into secret places
Reveal sweet clusters of angelic faces?

Where is the vale of lilies where at play,

Guarded by seraphs, infant angels are,
Christ walking with them in serenest day?

O mothers, broken-hearted and alone,
Lying with empty arms and bitter moan,

Do you not see it in a realm afar
When through the tears you shed in midnight dreams
A shimmering pathway from some bright star streams?

Where is the land of solitude, whose ways

Lead through long perilous passes into night
Of awful darkness, while the lightning blaze

On ghostly scenes and with fear's frenzy smite
The poor lost soul that, in such place of weir,
Feels, while it flies, a dreaded presence near,
Till suddenly a pale ray, faint and far
As the most tender twinkle of a star,
Shines through the gloom—and as we run it grows,
And as we near it still more brightly glows,
Until it draws us to a threshold o'er

Whose lintel like an angel it appears,
And while we gaze, lo! (happy, happy tears,)
A sainted mother opens wide the door.

Some time—and soon at farthest it must be—

A voice that some of us would not yet hear,
And some have waited for through many a year,
Will call from that dark region that we see
But for a moment when some dear one goes
Through the white door. Then with a calm repose
Befitting them that fear not death and hell,
Believing that He doeth all things well,
Answer the summons. Then will be forgot
All grief remembered and joy that is not,
For joy will be when in the unseen land
Death shall unclasp the weak but trusting hand,
And we shall find by Heaven's eternal streams
The lovely places that we see in dreams.

Two Friends

If you walk in the valley whose temples are shattered,
Whose statues lie broke where the still waters flow
Through gardens of brambles whose roses lie scattered

That bloomed in their pride long ago—
If you fain would forget, having hope, but too weary,
Too weak from the valley of silence to flee,
Yet praying for strength to escape from its dreary
Enthraldom—once more to be free—
There's a place where the chains of remembrance are
broken—

I am Sleep—come with me.

If your life is in darkness—if hope has departed
Your soul, leaving only the past for its friend,
And you sit by the fountain of tears broken-hearted
And secretly pray for the end—
If you wail by a grave from whose mound you can
never

Uplift your sad eyes to the world as of yore
Because *she* has left you forever and ever
Whose spirit your own did adore,
Come with me, there is rest for you, rest and no sorrow—

I am Death—weep no more.

Willows of Sorrow

I ask not the love of a heart that is burning
With all the wild fancies of youthful unrest,
That like the gay butterfly ever is turning
From blossom to blossom and never is blest.

I ask not the love of a soul that hereafter
May sigh to recall the delights that are flown,
For the life that is gleeful with song and with laughter
Would wither and die in the shade of my own.

The moon when surrounded by somber cloud billows
Doth shed a more tender and soul-soothing beam,
And the tide of affection is sweeter when willows
Of hallowing sorrow bend over the stream.

Winter Twilight

Which will go first my darling? Ah me, we do not
know.

Why do you muse over that to-night? Come lay
your head on my breast.
The moonlight is cold and lonely on the roofs of glittering snow,
But here it is warm, and here you are safe as a bird
in its nest.

Which will go first? So often you touch on that sorrowful theme.

We only know that one shall be called and the other
left, my dear.

No, no, weep not, your tears will start mine. You
sigh like one in a dream.
How pale we look in the marble light that slants in
the window here!
With your tearful lashes touching my cheek and your
arms about my neck,
Dare I think of a time when those eyes will be shut
and those hands give no love token!
Pray heaven that our love grow diviner with promise
of life that the grave cannot wreck
Or ever the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl
be broken.

A Prayerful Trust

The thought will sometimes come to me—
Where will I die, and in what way,
In gloom of night or light of day,
When will the solemn moment be?

Will any one a vigil keep,
Will I from the ordeal shrink
Or calmly in the dark sea sink;
Will any grieve—will any weep?

Where shall my grave be—will a stone
Be raised to mark awhile the spot,
Or will rude strangers, caring not,
Bury a man to them unknown?

O wife, when, how, or where, I trust
That He whose power serveth
Will reunite us after death
And resurrection from the dust.

Bells of Christmas

Bells of Christmas soon will chime,
And their tuneful notes will fly
From the steeples white with rime
To the clear star-frosted sky.

Soon the organ pipes will blow
Strains triumphant, loud and long,
And the happy choir arow
Fill the whispering church with song.

Soon the pungent scent of pine
Will perfume the chilly hall,
Holly spray and cedar twine
Precious pictures on the wall.

Soon the Christmas fires will flare
With a consciousness of light,
And home windows everywhere
Flood with golden mist the night.

Christmas bells, prepare to ring,
Let us have a joyful time,
From your lofty rafters swing
Till angels hear you chime.

Cricket on the poor man's hearth,
Get you ready with a thrill
That shall sing of joy on earth
Till his heart with laughter fill.

Elfs dancing at my side,
Now a secret word with ye:
On that happy eve abide
With the children in their glee,

And when midnight hour shall fare
Out each lamp of heaven blow,
And in silence fill the air
With a tinkling shower of snow.

Watch-Merfing

The silence of a house where death
Stands veiled and waiting at the door
Is now on earth.

* * * * *

With failing breath
The old year, dying, lifts once more
His voice. Hark! Ah, 'tis but to tell
The pale watch of the night farewell!
Gone—gone—gone—gone. The mourners turn
To the cold hall where dimly burn
Heaven's tapers, weeping as they go.
The kind old year—they loved him so
With all his faults. Let the bells toll
A requiem for that lonely soul
Now shuddering through the vault of night
Toward the morning gates of light.

Christmas Eve in the Country

All the land lies muffled in snow,
The steady north winds heavily blow,
The tops of the oaks are lost in the sky,
The drooping cedars bend to the ground,
The rose-bush is drifted into a mound,
And still from the somber clouds without sound
The white flakes whirling fly.

The fallow fields are buried deep,
The hedges hang in a tangled heap,
And racing rabbits under them stop,
While the wrens and sparrows flit and hop
In the sheltering briars and huddle to rest
From the stormy eve in their snow-hung nest.

The highway to the distant town,
Which wound through the tall trees yesterday,
In the wide white waste has faded away.
The fences are hid under dunes of down.
The long straight lane lies trackless and white,
And the rugged hill with its windy height,
Yesterday nothing but rock and clod,
Now looks like a wall of the city of God.

O life—O death—so dark, so drear—
I think as I sit in the gray light here,
Apart from the hearth at whose warm light
Friends and lovers will meet to-night
With Christmas greeting and laughter and song,
Of one whose voice has been hushed so long—
Of lips and of eyes that are folded low
Under the drifts of the falling snow.

Sparrows in the Snow

When I awoke the ground was white—
It had been snowing all the night—
And looking through the frosted pane,
On which a crescent drift was lain,
I saw two little sparrows brown
Half hid in twigs of tattered down.
The winter had been cold and hard,
And ice had covered street and yard
For many days; and these poor things,
With ruffled breasts and nestling wings
Perched in the icy twigs, had found
No food upon the frozen ground.
And now no doubt they thought with fear
That 'twould be winter all the year,
For while they slept the snow had swirled
Through all the silent hours of night,
And left them but a marble world
O'er which to chirp in cheerless flight.
"Ah, golden little vanity,"
I said to the canary swinging
In gilded cage and blithely singing,
"You'd lose your frolicsome insanity
And be a very sober bird
Had you no food, no fire to glow,
Like those poor sparrows in the snow—
Your song would hardly then be heard."
And saying this, I took the seed
Of rape and hemp from Folly's cage,
At which its little soul of greed
Protested with terrific rage,
And with a liberal hand I cast
The food upon the wintry blast.

The twigs let fall a flaky shower,
And never was a summer bower
More vocal with the twittered glee
Of birds than was that icy tree.
They saw the seeds. But what did they?
One, then the other, flew away.
Vexed at the silly things—to spurn
The food that they must sorely need—
Sighing, I was about to turn,
Thinking that I would no more heed
Sweet pity's voice—that Nature knew
Better than I did what to do
For her poor children—when my ear
Caught sound of chirp and flutter near.
Looking again, I saw below
A score of sparrows on the snow.

Here was a lesson sweetly taught
By Nature, (loveliest of teachers.)
The two lone birds that I had thought
Such silly, thankless little creatures
Had flown to tell their mates where they
Might find a feast that snowy day.
And down they came from trees and eaves
Like wind-blown brown autumnal leaves,
And soon the snow, all tracks and trails,
Was full of pert sky-tilted tails.

The Light'ood Fire

When wintry days are dark and drear
And all the forest ways grow still,
When gray snow-laden clouds appear
Along the bleak horizon hill,
When cattle all are snugly penned
And sheep go huddling close together,
When steady streams of smoke ascend
From farm-house chimneys—in such weather
Give me old Carolina's own,
A great log house, a great hearthstone,
A cheering pipe of cob or briar
And a red, leaping light'ood fire,

When dreary day draws to a close
And all the silent land is dark,
When Boreas down the chimney blows
And sparks fly from the crackling bark,
When limbs are bent with snow or sleet
And owls hoot from the hollow tree,
With hounds asleep about your feet,
Then is the time for reverie.
Give me old Carolina's own,
A hospitable wide hearthstone,
A cheering pipe of cob or briar
And a red, rousing light'ood fire.

Home From Camp-Meeting

The moon shone white along the road,
The summer night was still,
And the morning star like a torchlight glowed
From the top of Three Oak Hill.
The meadow grasses fed the air
With a scent deliciously fine,
And the spider spun his gossamer snare
From the blackjack tree to the pine.

Thousands of insects faintly sung
In the warmth of the southern night.
The bat flew low, and the great owl swung
Like a bell in the mystic light.
The ripe corn rustled its yellow blade,
The field-flowers woke from their swoon,
And the leaves of the wild grape lightly played
In the rays of the rising moon.

Down the road at a leisure pace
Rode Pete on his aged mare,
Whose clumsy feet left a little trace
Of dust in the silvery air.
The leather reins were dropped and hung
On the saddle-horn, and a song
Strangely pathetic the negro sung
As his piebald cantered along.
The tune was queer and the words were odd,
But the music filled the night,
As he sung of the wonderful love of God
And the shining robe of white.
His black face turned to the starry sky
Reflected stars in tears,
For Pete was happy—with seer's eye
He saw beyond the years.

The Music of the Storm

I stood on the deck alone at night beneath a murky
sky.
The coming storm was heralded by the long waves
rolling high.
Afar, afar in the darkness I marked their gleaming
spray—
Blue lines of kindling fire that softly burned and died
away.
Then darkness fell like a pall on the waters and over
me
And the hissing rain with fury beat down the frantic
sea.

Wrapped from the storm securely I courted the tem-
pest's might.
I felt a thrilling pleasure in the great abysmal night
With the wet wind whistling through my beard and
sweeping across my eyes,
Listening to voices such as I never before had heard
arise—
Voices calling, calling—shadows pursued and found,
Shrieking aloft in the booming blast—falling, falling,
and drowned.

And I felt the power and beauty of music unknown
before—
Music to rouse the godliness and the majesty of man.
The ship swept the diapason of the thundering ocean
floor
And down with the leaping lightning the storm's high
treble ran,
And far, afar along the sea in the gulf of darkness
bowled
The mighty midnight symphony was rapturously
rolled.

Crismus Times Is Come

Wen de sheppuds watch de sheep on de plain ob Befe-
hem

(Crismus times is come,)

Dey was 'stonished at de star dat went a-swinging
ober dem,

(Crismus times is come;)

Dey lean upon the sheppud crooks a-shadin' ob der
eyes,

(Crismus times is come,)

An' dey know the sun ob glory was a gwine fur to rise,
(Crismus times is come,)

De wise men walk wid der heads ben low

Twel dey hear a ban' o' music like dey nebber
hear befo',

An' de angels come a singin' wid de stars in
der han's

An' der flamin' wings a-shinin' on de heathun
lan's.

De kings ob de erf woke up dat night,

(Crismus times is come,)

An' der crowns look shabby in de hallyluyer light,

(Crismus times is come,)

But de po' man riz en tuck his ole hat down,

(Crismus times is come,)

An' hit look so fine dat he fought it were a crown,

(Crismus times is come.)

Ole Jordan roll high en ole Jordan roll low,

An' de star stood still whar de folks had
to go,

An' de angels flew away agin a-leavin' arter
dem

A blaze road from Juda to de new Jerusa-
lem.

Den pile on de light'ood en set aroun' de fire,
(Crismus times is come,)

Rosum up the ole bow en chune the banjer higher,
(Crismus times is come;)

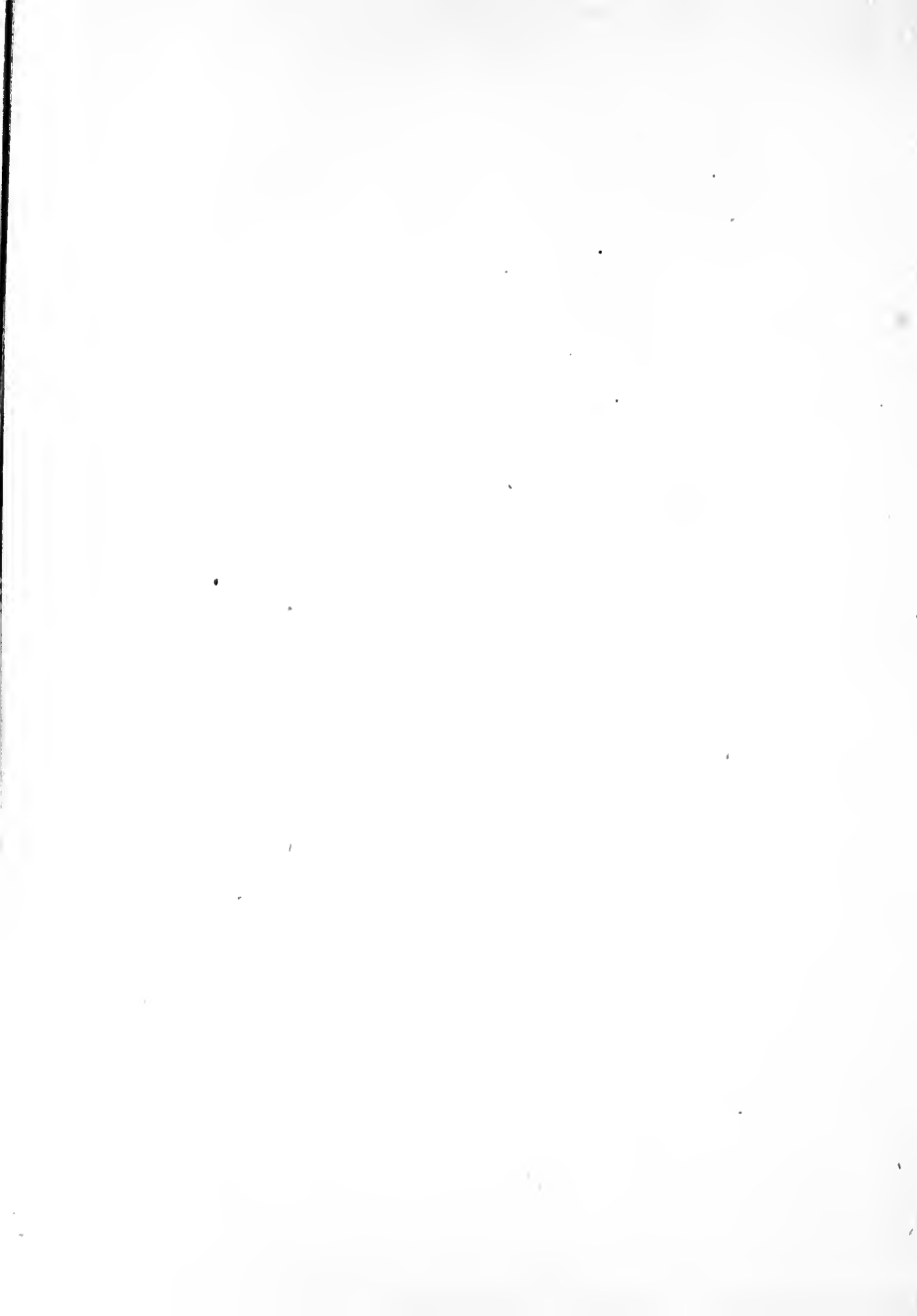
Dere's no mo' coonin' ob de log in de night,
(Crismus times is come,)

O glory to de lam' fur de hallyluyer light,
(Crismus times is come.)

De Crismus possum am a-bakin' mighty snug,
So han' aroun' de tumbler en de little yaller
jug

Wid de co'ncob stopper, en de honey in de
bowl,

An' a-glory hallyluyer en a-bless yo' soul.



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